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To THE

RT. REV. JOHN WILLIAMS, D. D.,

BISHOP OF CONNECTICUT,

HONORED FOR HIS OFFICE'S SAKE, LOVED FOR HIS OWN,

This Book

IS DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR.

THESE Lectures on Moses were delivered to the congregation of St. James' Church, New London, Conn., on the Friday evenings of the winter of 1867–8. They were acceptable, and a desire was expressed that they should be preserved in a book. Their author, perhaps too readily, assented. They lay no claims to originality. The readers of them will easily discover some of the sources from which they were drawn. Dean Stanley was much looked into, but seldom contributed more than a pretty phrase or happy term of expression. His history is mainly a romance.

R. A. H.

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I.

THE MAN.

The man Moses was very great. — EXODUS xi. 3.

AMONG the personages of Scripture none stands out more prominently and more grandly than Moses. The heroic and the saintly were blended in him. The meekest of men, he was nevertheless bold, energetic, adventurous, intrepid. He united in himself the warrior and the sage, the man of letters and the man of action. He was lawgiver, judge, and king; the maker of a nation, its historian, and its bard; its leader in war, its teacher in religion, its guide and director in the arts of peace. The germ of its civil and of its moral life sprang from him: to him it owed whatever it came to be in time, whatever it learned to look for in eternity; purer morals, better ideas of God, wiser institutions, holier hopes and aspirations than were known to the peoples around it, whether these were the wild tribes of Edom, and Ammon, and Moab, or the polished monarchies of Phœnicia, Syria, Chaldea, and Egypt. His transmitted influence it was that in after days gave Jerusalem an honor above Tyre, and Damascus, and Babylon, and Memphis, and that made it "the glory of the whole earth," not so much because "beautiful for situation," as because "God was known in her palaces for a sure refuge."

In the caption of the ninetieth Psalm, by whomsoever prefixed, he is called "Moses the man of God;" while God Himself says of him, "My servant Moses who is faithful in all my house, with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold." And his history is finally summed up in the declaration, that "There arose not a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." He was admitted to such close and familiar intimacy with the Almighty that "the skin of his face shone," and was honored thus with a lower measure of that *transfiguration* which the "Prophet like unto him," but far greater, displayed to the chosen three in the days of His flesh. Such was he on the sacred and spiritual side of his life.

And his secular eminence was not less. He was "King in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together." He "commanded them a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob." He was their captain in war and their governor in peace. His words came to them with the lively impress of Divinity, armed with an authority that none dared to question or gainsay. He was their champion, their advocate, their guardian, their leader, their monitor, their legislator, their protector, their sovereign. Never did man sustain to people so complex a relation, such various and distinct offices, all executed so wisely, so beneficently, so efficiently, without interference or confusion. No perils daunted him, no suffering unnerved him, no waywardness and ingratitude of the people wearied out his patience. This on his secular side; and even secular eyes, looking upon it fairly, must own him surpassingly,

wonderfully grand, and see that the great ones of history in whom they are wont to glory as the top and flower of man, pale and grow dim in his presence. Where can they find such a *combination* of excellences, such a *wealth* of resources, such a *variety* of functions, relations, and offices, and all so wisely and justly combined and balanced, employed with motives so pure and unselfish, for ends so great and so salutary, exhibiting versatility without inconstancy, and variety without contradiction.

His training fitted him for his life. He knew hard life and soft life. He grew up in the atmosphere of a court the most voluptuous and elegant of the age, the acknowledged ward and charge of its royal house, as the adopted son of the sovereign's daughter. He walked in the halls of the Pharaoh as a prince among the nobles. And yet he dwelt many years in the *wilderness*, and there chose the companion of his life, a shepherd, a herdsman, living on rude fare and wandering from place to place. He was equally at home in Pharaoh's palace and in Jethro's tent, in the green meadows of the Nile and in the deserts of Horeb. And it was in this life of strange vicissitude and contrast, of alternate luxury and hardship, that he became fitted for his life-task, and when he came to it he knew *how* to do it, and did it well. This life it was that had taught him how to lead a huge army of slaves through a forty years' sojourn in the wilderness, and at the same time to frame them into a nation, give them a firm and enduring polity, teach them the arts of life, and not a few of its embellishments and elegancies, and fit them for a settled life in the land to which he was leading them.

Moses was a man of accomplishments. He "was

learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, and was mighty in words and in deeds." Like Cæsar, he was the historian of his own achievements; and that he was a historian in the best sense, none can doubt, who read his clear, terse, graphic, and picturesque narrations in the pages of the Pentateuch. That he was a poet is plain from the ninetieth Psalm, if he was its author; from his magnificent ode on the passage of the Red Sea; from the memorial song which he left to be sung by the Israelites in after ages; and from his dying benedictions of the tribes. While as an orator, he comes not less strikingly to view in the solemn and fervent exhortations of the Book of Deuteronomy. Such a many-sided man, good and great in such a variety of shapes, relations, and circumstances, human history nowhere else presents to view. Orator, poet, historian, prince, courtier, sheik, captain, legislator, king, teacher, prophet, judge, and in all, the humble, faithful, constant, earnest, conscientious servant of God, and servant of man for the Lord's sake — such was Moses.

Our text tells us that "the man Moses was very great." The account adds, indeed, "in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people." But his fame has not faded with time. It is not local or temporary. Still is he very great in the sight of men, and will be very great till the world shall end. Nor is it the least of his glory, that in all his dignities and achievements, he sought not his own glory but was ever unambitious and unselfish, never ostentatious nor domineering, taking no state upon him, exacting no homage. He handed down no hereditary rank nor power to his children. They were immediately, on his death, absorbed and

lost in the mass of the nation, so that he stands alone, without antecedent or successor, in severe and naked simplicity, a grand instrument, doing a grand work, in a grand spirit. The Son of Sirach, many ages after, spoke the national sentiment towards him who was a nation's founder and father in such a sense as no other man ever could be, when he calls him a "man which found favor with God and man, whose memorial is blessed." "God," says he, "made him like to the glorious saints, and magnified him, so that his enemies stood in fear of him. He made him glorious in the sight of kings, and gave him a commandment for His people, and showed him part of His glory. He sanctified him in his faithfulness and meekness, and chose him out of all men. He made him to hear His voice, and brought him into the dark cloud, and gave him commandments before His face, even the law of life and knowledge, that he might teach Jacob His covenants, and Israel His judgments." The reverence of the nation half-deified him. It was the accusation of Stephen, that they "had heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." And at the very end of Scripture, in the Apocalypse, the redeemed are heard in their everlasting praises, mingling "the song of Moses the servant of God with the song of the Lamb."

To some of the principal facts in the life of the great Hebrew, I purpose to invite your attention this winter, hoping to extract from them something to interest and instruct my hearers. It is believed that the survey will amply sustain and justify the eulogy into which I have been unconsciously drawn. As the grand figure has risen before my mind in dwelling upon it, and disclosed its beauties, what was intended

for a brief introduction has grown into dimensions quite beyond my purpose. And, it is thought, that what is represented as great in the sum, will become yet greater in our estimation as it is seen to be great in its details and parts on future occasions. What has already been said of him this evening may supply us with some profitable topics of thought.

For great occasions, God raises up and qualifies great men. For the accomplishment of His purposes, God creates His instruments and fits them for their work. When there is a work to be done, there is a man to do it: God has made the man, and made him such a man as the work needs. He has endowed him, and trained him, with special reference to it; and, when the time has come, He sets him to his work and he does it. The man may not know what he is doing. Blessed is he if he does, as the great man now before us did, and for God's sake gives his heart to it as well as his hand. But whether he knows and feels it or not, he is doing a piece of work for God, and God will surely reward him for it; for He uses no agent that He does not pay, though the *kind* of pay will depend upon the spirit of the worker. Success is reward, the accomplishment of the worker's purpose; but, if that purpose involved God's will and glory as higher than any will or glory of his own, then there shall be a far higher and more enduring recompense than any mere success. When the time calls for him, the needed Nebuchadnezzar or Cyrus, or indeed Cæsar or Washington or Napoleon, is forthcoming to chastise or to bless. The sense of such a mission is most ennobling and energizing when it is true, and makes the weak strong. When it is a *false* conceit, it produces a fanatic or a madman, mischievous or ridiculous. *Here* was a great work to be done. A

race of slaves was to be rescued from the debasing influences and effects of bondage, and elevated into a nation. The Church of God was to be raised out of the rudimental form of a family, which it had outgrown, turned into a national institution, and supplied with a polity and ordinances suited to its new position, without a breach in its continuity. A numerous people was to be forcibly taken out from under Egypt's powerful sceptre, carried out into the desert to sojourn, and there disciplined, shaped into a fitness for the new form of life upon which it was appointed to enter. It was to have a new heart put into it, be fashioned from a loose assemblage into order and discipline, and be prepared to take its place among the family of nations and play an illustrious part in the coming history of the world. A more marvelous transformation history does not record. A man was needed for the work, and God made a man for it, the man Moses, and educated him for his high calling carefully and patiently. See, indeed, how *nicely* his education was adapted to the desired result. There were two distinct stages in it. The Egyptian and the Midianitish.

In the first of them, moreover, there were two separate elements at work, each with its own needful contribution to the end: there was just that combination of elements that the case demanded. In it an Egyptian and a Hebrew training were united. The princess that took him up, and adopted him for her own son provided the first; and under it he became "learned in all the wisdom of Egypt," gained the accomplishments of a court, grew familiar with the machinery of government, learned law and organic social life, and acquired the forms and sentiments of refined and civilized society. And, at the very same

time, a less conspicuous but more needful and effective education was going on by a *mother* in the disguise of a nurse; and Jochebed, unknown to her employer in her true relation to her charge, with a true mother's heart and a mother's tireless assiduity, under the shade of her humble office had opportunity to teach him better ideas of God and sounder views of religion than Egyptian schools could impart: to tell him who he was, and keep alive in him that Hebrew heart which preserved him from ever becoming an Egyptian in more than appearance, and prepared him in due time to become the avenger of his people's wrongs, and its deliverer from the degradation and baseness of its servitude. Two women were thus conspiring to make him what he became, all unconsciously, and without foreknowledge of God's intent; the one, following, it may be, a mere freak of pity or indulging a princess' pretty fancy to display a fair and handsome boy for her minion and her pet among the swarthy nobles of her father's court; the other, inspired by the deep instinct of maternal affection. And these two, each in her sphere, were working *together* to imbue him with learning, secular and divine, and send him forth to his work, the work for which God had made him, a Hebrew with Egyptian intelligence and culture, as a patriot and a prophet, the best possible instrument to do just that particular work that God was to put into his hands. And then began the *second* stage of his education, not *less* fit and appropriate than that which had preceded it. He was sent out into the *wilderness*, there to learn *wilderness* life, and to become a Midianite, as he had been an Egyptian, while he should be still not the less in heart a Hebrew. Here, by his marriage with the daughter of Jethro, the prince or sheik of Midian, he was

identified with that people, and brought into the closest intimacy with its customs and manner of life. And how important was this for a man who was to pass forty years of his life in that same wilderness, at the head of a body of men whose life must perforce be all that time the wilderness life, and whose intercourse, peaceful or hostile, must be with such tribes of men as the Midianites were.

How valuable to him a knowledge of the ways of the desert before he entered the desert, some experience of its hardships and endurances, some observation of the sentiments and traditions that governed its people, superadded to his trainings in the country of the Nile. How kindly and suitably is this intermediate stage thrown in between his Egyptian life, and his long sojourning in the wilds of Arabia. How wisely and beneficently ordered was it that he did not step at once from the voluptuousness of Memphis to the wastes of Sinai, but went to them through the rougher but not ungenial hospitalities of Jethro, and the ruder scenes and occupations of a pastoral and nomadic life, amidst the solitudes of Horeb. Egypt was the university in which the elements of general knowledge and intelligence were acquired and stored up, leavened by the private and gentle lessons in the fear of God that went along with them; and Midian, the higher school, in which he was taught to apply this knowledge to the uses of that form of life in which the remainder of his work on earth was to be performed.

And now the work of training in its contrasted phases was complete, and the voice came to him, "Come, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayst bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." Then his life had found its work, the

meaning of all that had gone before was made clear, the mystery of God's dealings was opened, and the purpose for which God had dealt so wonderfully with him set in the plainest light.

And yet all this was but development, the flowering out of seeds that were planted at his birth. Education is but the educing of that, the rudiment of which is in the man already. No man ever becomes anything which he was not always capable of becoming. There was never anything in Moses, the germ of which was not in him at the first. So it is with all men. All men can become something. No man can become everything. In the original constitution of the man, the boundary is set which he can never overpass. Yet what an amount of capacity in men lies oftentimes hidden and unsuspected! How much we perform that we never supposed ourselves capable of performing! What strange transformations we undergo! How unlike we become to anything we ever dreamed of! How seldom is the dream of early life fulfilled! "The heart of man deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps." And how much occasion has to do with our development, in *bending* our powers in this or that direction.

And oftentimes the meaning, the special purport of our life, does not show itself *early*. We do this and that, and perhaps think we are doing our life-work, when its specialty is not yet reached, and we are only being educated for it. Moses was forty years old when he went to Midian; and not till years after was he commissioned to deliver Israel; yet *that* was the mission of his life. All before was but a learning how to fulfill it. Our Saviour began to be about thirty years old when He entered on His work. Of the same age was John

the Baptist. Let us not be impatient. We are all in God's hands. "We are the clay and He our potter," and it may be long before He tells us what vessel He intends to make of us. Let us each do what is immediately before him well, and with a faithful heart, and trust God without anxious thoughts for the future. Certainly, there does seem to be a great amount of latent and idle power in human society, of faculties lying dormant that only lack occasion to draw them out and lead them to brilliant results. "Some mute inglorious Milton," "some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood," may be dwelling among us in homely, unsuspected shapes. We might, with our powers brought into fuller action, be much better or much worse than we are, a blessing or a curse.

And if we are conscious in ourselves of powers that are waiting unemployed for lack of scope or opportunity, let us not despair. There is another life. The expansion we pant after may be behind the vail. There may be an eternity-work, if not a life-work for us, as grand and glorious as we can desire. And if we are educating for that, surely it is enough. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Some humble and obscure life may have in it the rudiments of a great dignity in the world above. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

II.

THE YOUTH OF MOSES.

Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. — Exodus ii. 9.

Moses, of whose early life I am to speak to-night, was the son of Amram and Jochebed, of the tribe of Levi, the tribe which afterwards became the priesthood of the nation, a tribe always remarkable for its ardent and energetic temperament. The curse of Jacob, which rested upon it for the violence of its forefather Levi, had not as yet been mitigated and even transformed into a blessing while yet its letter was fulfilled, as it subsequently was.

The boy first saw the light in an evil time. He was not the first-born of his parents; both Aaron and Miriam were older. At the period of his birth, by a change of dynasty, a new line of kings sat upon the Egyptian throne; and the Pharaoh that then was "knew not Joseph." He was either ignorant of the benefits he had conferred upon the nation; or he purposely ignored the services of the illustrious Hebrew as among the traditions of a family that had been driven from power. But the wealth and prosperity of the Hebrews excited his envy, and their rapidly increasing numbers might even warrant the fear that so large a foreign element, so obstinately refusing to blend with the people and remaining so firmly wedded to its

own ideas and customs, might in time become formidable, and disturb the peace of the state. Pharaoh felt that he was but half a king in Goshen, and that the heads of the tribe were more truly its rulers than he.

Such a power within a power Pharaoh thought dangerous, and not unnaturally. To suppress this, and at the same time put a stop to the rapid growth of the prolific race, he commanded that every male infant belonging to it should be put to death, quite after the arbitrary and unscrupulous fashion of an Oriental despot; while at the same time he reduced the whole people to the condition of serfdom, and "did set over them task-masters, to afflict them with their burdens." And "they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor." In this way the spirit of the people was to be broken, and the race gradually exterminated. This was man's wisdom, and it might have prospered if there had not been a God, whose foolishness is wiser than men, and whose weakness is stronger than men. What a blessed thing it is to know that God takes care of His own cause! Surely, if it were not so, it would have perished a thousand times over. But His presence in it makes it like "a teil-tree and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves." Surely, the promise is fulfilled, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." Strong Pharaoh is not strong enough to destroy weak Israel. "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early."

"In which time," says St. Stephen, in this dismal ebb and eclipse, and when the embryo nation seemed likely to be stifled in the womb, "Moses was born, and

was exceeding fair." "They saw that he was a proper child," says St. Paul. "A goodly child" the original record calls him. His personal comeliness continued through life, according to tradition; and this is embodied and perpetuated in Michael Angelo's noble statue of him in the Church of St. Peter in Vinculis, in Rome.

For three months his parents kept his birth a secret; but when Pharaoh's cruel decree could no longer be eluded, and they were forced to cast him into the Nile, a mother's inventive affection hit upon a device in which there might be at least a feeble chance of his preservation. Jochebed prepared for her doomed son a basket made of the papyrus, a species of sedge that grew to a large size in the shallow edges of the Nile, whose pith, cut into thin slices and pasted together, was used to write upon, before the substance was invented which has taken at once its office and its name, — our paper. In a basket constructed of this primitive paper, glued together with bitumen, the sad mother laid the goodly infant, that it might bear him to a salvation which perhaps some divine light in her mind dimly foreshowed; or be his decent coffin in death, secure from the crocodiles of the river, that would never touch the papyrus. She placed it among the reeds by the water-side that it might not be carried away by the current. Underneath this mother's care, Providence, that Providence of which she was the unconscious instrument, was preparing for the child a wonderful deliverance, and a more wonderful exaltation. And yet the means of effecting it were the simplest and most natural that could be, — merely a woman's instinctive and ingenious love, and a woman's gentle pity.

The poor mother, having done all she could for her child, withdrew, saying in her heart like Hagar in the

wilderness, "Let me not see the death of the child." But a sister, doubtless that Miriam who afterwards acts a conspicuous part in the history, lingers "to wit what would be done to him;" and she, too, soon finds that she also is an agent of Providence, and that her mingled curiosity and affection have detained her there to do the hidden will of God. Oh! this higher will and our untrammeled wills, how strangely they concur. And now, He who "seeth the end from the beginning," and knows how to make contingencies certainties for His purposes while they are contingencies still, and can set separate beings into harmonious and simultaneous action for the same end without concert or mutual knowledge, sent another agent, little dreaming what she was to do, to add her contribution also to the making of a great man, and a greater actor on the stage of the world. The daughter of Pharaoh, to whom ancient tradition has assigned the name of Thermuthis, came to bathe in the river at the very spot where the infant lay sleeping in its floating cradle, unconscious alike of its present peril and of its coming greatness. "And when she saw the ark among the flags she sent her maid to fetch it." Moses himself is the narrator, though like Cæsar, who was also his own historian in a later age, he speaks of himself in the third and not in the first person. "And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and she said, This is one of the Hebrews' children."

And now, Miriam, thou art to see what it was that thou wast watching for so assiduously. A thought starts up in her mind as she sees what is taking place near her, and the quick-witted girl at once acts upon it. She shows herself, and says to the princess, "Shall

I go and call one of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother." Imagine the alacrity with which the happy little maiden sped on her joyful errand. Jochebed soon came. "And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." And now, Jochebed, thou hast thy child again. Thy motherly care and tenderness are rewarded amply. The papyrus coffin thou madest for him with trembling fingers, and eyes blinded with tears, is not his coffin, but the antecedent of a cradle in Pharaoh's palace. In all Memphis there is no child cared for more royally than thy forsaken babe. "And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses," which signifies rescued from the water; "and she said, Because I drew him out of the water." And so "the child of the water," under the care of his mother-nurse, grew up in Pharaoh's court for the destiny which, in God's time, was to make him the scourge of Pharaoh's kingdom.

And now his education for that noble destiny which awaited him began and went forward, supplied by confluent streams divine and secular; the lore of Abrahamic theism and morals from his Hebrew mother in blood, the treasures of worldly science, art, and accomplishment from his Egyptian mother by adoption. The result only is recorded: Moses was "the man of God," and was "learned in all the wisdom of Egypt." But how the process went on we can imagine with a good degree of confidence and certainty, at least in its general features. Egypt was at this period the home of knowledge; and Egyptian wisdom and civilization were

far in advance of those of any other land. There already rose the pyramids, still in their hugeness and solidity a wonder to men; the obelisks, supposed to be symbols of the sun-worship, and in their needle-like form to represent his rays — fresh to-day in the capitals of Europe; the sphinxes, the representatives of some occult and inscrutable sagacity, still keeping their look of tame and mild solemnity; and the huge tombs in which the nation expressed its reverence for the dead, and its belief in immortality, in their coffined corpses even now untouched by decay. What wisdom it had it imparted to Moses in its highest perfection. His position in the royal household secured this. At On or Heliopolis, the city of the sun (whose pontiff's daughter Joseph the preserver had taken to wife in other days), a great seat of learning and religion, tradition has fixed his training, at least not improbably. Here, whatever of mental development and culture men had then reached he attained, whatever knowledge they had gathered he acquired. Meanwhile, he gained at court the lighter embellishments which adorn knowledge and too often take its place, or are valued above it. The sovereign looked benignly on his daughter's amiable freak, and gave it scope and opportunity unrestricted. So with his fair, handsome Hebrew face, an Egyptian in garb, in manners, and in mode of life, he played his part among the dusky sons of Misraim, their admiration and their envy, but guarded from insult and from harm by the mildness and modesty of his nature, and by the shield of Pharaoh's authority.

But while this exoteric education was going on, an esoteric training, dearer, more vital, far higher in its aims and results, was going on secretly along with it.

Jochebed had undoubtedly revealed to him the secret of his birth, how in the disguise of a nurse she was his mother; but from all beyond the family circle it was carefully hidden. In ancient times the position of the nurse was one of much honor and importance, and her relation to the foster-child was recognized and honored through life. When the proper offices of a nurse were no longer needed, Moses thus still had access to Amram's dwelling, and it became to him the school of a higher learning than any Heliopolis could impart. There from a mother's lips he learned the story of the great forefather Abraham, his call, and God's covenant with him and his seed; the meaning of the mark of circumcision in his flesh, and the duties to which it bound him; the divine unity and holiness; the worship and service that is the Creator's due; was made tenderly alive to the wrongs and sufferings of his people; was taught patriotism and piety, and prepared to become in due time the vindicator of Israel's freedom and faith. Thus the livery he wore, rich and gorgeous as it was, grew irksome to him, and the Hebrew heart beat high beneath his Egyptian exterior, till at length the mask was thrown aside, and he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." That was not a merely earthly reward; none such was to be looked for. "Wherefore they are not to be heard," says our Church in her Seventh Article, "which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises."

Both sides of the rearing up of Moses afford us instruction.

See how much in the making up of the leader of His chosen people God makes of secular instruction — what ample provision God made for it in his equipment for his arduous and difficult task. The Scriptures give no countenance to ignorance. The leader of God's people was to know all that the world could teach him. He would have need of it all in the fulfillment of his mission. It would continually come in play in his office of controlling, guiding, and arranging the people in their departure from Egypt, and in their weary march to Canaan. He had need of skill, of intelligence, of information, of large and various intellectual endowments and thorough furniture of mind, in order to meet the exigencies and occasions of his great work. In Egypt's schools and in Egypt's court he gained them; and they were not the worse that they were gained in Egypt's schools and court, albeit these were worldly and idolatrous. The world has knowledge to impart which the Church may gladly accept. "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light;" the latter may in certain particulars profitably sit at their feet. The Church is in many ways beholden to the world. Egypt was largely a benefactor to Moses and to the Israelitish people. The people were to be formed into a commonwealth with firm and stable institutions, and prepared to take their place in the family of nations with something of the dignity and honor which befitted them as "a kingdom of priests and a peculiar people." The nascent nation was to receive its mould and form; the crude mass of humanity, rising out of the baseness of slavery, was to be fashioned into order and symmetry. Nothing that Egypt had imparted would be without its use in such a task. God did not despise

it as a means, but subsidized it, and brought all its resources and influences to bear in making for Himself the man who was to lift His Church from a tribe into a nation, from slavery to independence. Though He could have communicated all these qualifications to Moses by a direct gift, He did not, but chose to bestow them upon him by means — by the nurture of the world, in her schools, and in a large and lengthened intimacy with her people. That is Divine wisdom in the matter. And this wisdom applies always and everywhere. To despise secular knowledge, and think that we are better Christians for being destitute of worldly lore, is fanaticism, and not piety. Civilization is the ally of religion and not its foe. Intelligence strengthens godliness, and does not lower or injure it. All that tends to enlarge the mind, store it with information, enliven it with ideas, quicken and facilitate its action, if only it be consecrated to God's service, increases the man's satisfaction and usefulness in his religious life, and enables him to do better service to God and to man. That ignorance is the mother of devotion is a dogma worthy of the darkness out of which it came. It should have no place among us. Let us rather gladly welcome and faithfully improve all the means of secular culture within our reach for ourselves and our children, and understand that God is by them educating us for Himself, to do His work, to promote His glory more efficiently; perhaps, for some station, some task, of which as yet we have no premonition; certainly, to do our work more successfully and honorably in that state of life into which it has pleased Him to call us.

Finally, see the value of early and specially of maternal influence, in its bearing on the religious character

and life. What a power both of impulsion and of resistance it had in the case of Moses! By this means Jochebed against fearful odds was successful, more than a match for them. An obscure woman, with no more than ordinary attainments, of a proscribed race, acting in a capacity little better than menial, she was too much for all Egypt's sages, and scholars, and priests, and nobles, and rulers. There was not one of all these powerful classes whose influence was not diametrically opposed to hers; and yet hers prevailed. There were two things that gave her great advantage in the contest. She got the start of them. She worked by the law of love. Before any Egyptian influence could reach the child, she had possession of his ear and of his heart. Then she engraved the name of the Creator on his soul, and instilled into him those principles of truth and rules of duty which ever after remained in him infixed and immovable. Amidst the seductions of a court, with rank, and wealth, and unbounded opportunity of indulgence inviting him to a life of elegant ease, voluptuous idleness, or vicious sensuality, it kept him firm, and made him true to the great purpose of making his life a contribution to God's glory and man's good. Nor could the idolatries of Egypt, the sun-worship of Heliopolis, and all the erudition of her priests and learned men shake his faith in Jehovah, — the simple, sublime, theology of Amram and Jochebed, that "to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we by Him," and that to love Him and do His will is "our reasonable service."

What an encouragement is here to all mothers, to all parents! What an admonition to them to be faithful, and work in hope! How much greater things they

may be laboring for than they contemplate or foresee. It may not be theirs to rear a Moses, the founder of a polity or the benefactor of a nation, but it is theirs to train one whom God will in some way honor and use as an instrument of blessing to mankind. Hear then God saying to you with a deeper meaning than the princess thought of, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." And be ye well assured that whosoever obeys, "receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal."

III.

MOSES' CHOICE.

And it came to pass, in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens. — EXODUS ii. 11.

THE life of Moses divides itself into three equal parts, each of forty years' duration: its Egyptian, its Midianitish, and its Israelitish stage; as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, as the guest and retainer of Jethro, and as the leader of God's own people in the desert. The first two of these were education for the third, in which finally the true purpose and honor of his life were reached, and his proper life-work was comprised. The first of these marked divisions was now past, and he was about to enter upon the second. We have reached the close of the first stage. Moses was now forty years old, mature, imbued with knowledge, and fully competent to act his free and unfettered part on the stage of life. When human life was longer, maturity came later; and there was not then the same early impatience of control, and headstrong haste to attain independent action which characterize our days. "And when he was full forty years old," says the narrative of St. Stephen, "it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel." He felt within him the stirring of a noble ambition to be something more than a parasite and nursling of the Egyptian court. He aspired to be the benefactor and deliverer of his people, and doubtless

also felt a consciousness, more or less definite, that this impulse was divine, that God had called him to the work. In the inner chambers of his soul he heard a voice sounding, Go forth to the work I have given thee to do; and it filled him with awe and eagerness. Like Hercules in the fable, he stood at the point whence two paths diverged, each presenting to him its own peculiar offers and persuasions. The one set before him achievement, the other indulgence; the one usefulness, the other pleasure; the one action and the other ease. Whether his nature was to be noble or ignoble, his life grand or insignificant, his choice would determine.

To a noble nature such as his, above all a nature ennobled by grace, in which the Spirit of God was moving and the voice of God speaking, the preference of that course which bore upon it the mark of God, duty, and true honor, though it wore a stern and solemn aspect, was prompt, clear, and unequivocal. The lessons he had learned stealthily under the roof of Amram had imbedded themselves deeply in his soul, and became the fruitful seeds of correspondent action, bringing forth "fruit after their kind." And now, there were mingled with them workings of the Divine Spirit to make them germinate, and stir the vitality that was in them, to start the germs into vigorous growth, and give them strength to break through the crust of that other training which had enveloped them with the false appearance of its own quality. If he looked one way there lay before him a life of ease, pleasure, elegance, wealth, rank, to wear out his days in some harmless inanity among books and courtly forms, or in some such civil occupations as an Egyptian prince might follow, and then to sleep in mummied

grandeur in the painted chamber of a royal tomb, and, thousands of years after, be kept, it may be, for a show in a museum, perhaps even in this then unknown world. But there was opened before him, on the other hand, an avenue to a truer and higher honor. Patriotism and piety called him into it. It involved peril, loss, hardship, suffering. He should be the servant of God and of men, the maker of a nation, a prophet to the Church of God; and though he should pour out his life at last on the rough mountain top, and no man should know of his sepulchre, God would care even for his flesh and glorify it, and in after ages send him in a "spiritual body" with Elijah, to do honor to His Son on earth, and be with Him before the eyes of the three chosen men in "the image of the heavenly."

The choice was made, and it was decisive and final. And what it was, St. Paul tells us when he speaks of him as "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," "refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" longer. Thus he cast in his lot with a company of despised and downtrodden slaves, and gave himself up to be their captain and instructor in working out for themselves emancipation and independence. None but a low-minded and groveling soul will question, that, even aside from religious considerations, the choice was wise and honorable.

His choice, thus deliberately made, was at once brought to the test of both action and trial, that in them he might obtain the assurance to himself and to others of its sincerity and its strength. As he looked on the burdens of his brethren, "he spied an Egyptian

smiting a Hebrew." The sight kindled within him the flame of a righteous anger. Though still an Egyptian prince in seeming, the sense of his Hebrew lineage and blood prompted him to act the part of an avenger of Hebrew wrongs. The provocation added intensity to his previous purpose instead of shaking it. A Hebrew he was; a Hebrew he would show himself. Doubtless, too, with the occasion he felt rising within him more distinctly the sense of a divine mission, and heard yet more plainly the voice of God within him, calling him to his work and clothing him with an authority to execute the functions that pertained to it, without waiting for a commission from man, the warrant of a ruler, or the people's voice. He was the head of his people by a divine commission, and could say like St. Paul, "Not of men, neither by man, but by God the Father." Henceforward it was his to make laws for Israel and enforce them, to promote their interests, and to punish their wrongs. And though the commission waited forty years for the full development and execution of its powers, it was never withdrawn or in any way curtailed or contracted. This made him "a minister of God to execute wrath" by a better right than any that man can confer.

So "he looked this way and that way, and, when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known." Or, in the language of St. Stephen's par-

allel and illustrative account, "And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?"

He had manifested himself as a minister of justice and a minister of peace. Eyes that he knew not of had seen the deed, and men knew of it. "Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian." The choice was now perfect; consummated by action, sealed with a sacrament of blood, hardened into an inflexible purpose by the endurance in its behalf of censure and reproach. He had crossed the Rubicon; he had drawn the sword and thrown away the scabbard; he was henceforth not an Egyptian, but an Israelite, the Avenger, the Champion, the Deliverer of his enslaved and downtrodden race. He had cast behind him rank, wealth, comfort, pleasure. He had given himself up to the hard and thankless task of delivering his people from bondage, and raising them up to freedom and independence. How thankless that task was to be, among a people whom slavery had made weak and mean and cowardly, his first essay had shown. Herein how true and how illustrious a type was he of Him, who in working out a far nobler

salvation for "the Jew first and also for the Gentile" "came unto His own, and His own received Him not;" who "was despised and rejected of men;" of whom it is written that "neither did His brethren believe on Him;" and who, in all His work of love and mercy to men, encountered from those whom He came to save "the contradiction of sinners against Himself."

Moses in this choice stands to us as the pattern of a true nobleness, and in this nobleness, of an enlightened and far-seeing wisdom. And such wisdom, in its true reach and scope, is religion; since, to those whose "days are as a handbreadth" here, there can be no true nobleness or true wisdom in any outlook that does not reach out into that eternity whose "thousand years are as one day," and learn to measure its values and its aims by everlasting results. So it was, according to St. Paul, with Moses. All religious minds have in them a tincture of nobleness. Mean though they still be from the poverty of their original texture, they are less mean than they would be without it. Religion has enlarged their horizon and elevated their aims; has brought great thoughts and great purposes into their souls; has taught them to live not for the little, ephemeral, transitory objects of this world, but the grand, imperishable, glorious interests of an endless condition. If it has not done this, it has no life in it; it is but a dead rind of ceremonies. That Moses had views thus broad and far-reaching is plain. Yet even in this life there was enough in the scope of his mission to awaken an enthusiasm that was more than a match for the counter attractions of the immediate good which it induced him to forego. His mind was one not poor, small, and mean in its original nature. It had room in it for great ideas, and strength to digest them into great

purposes. The freedom of a race, its conversion into a nation, its establishment in a country of its own, its reduction to order under a civil and religious polity capable of affording it permanent prosperity and improvement — the seeds of all these great things were in the choice which Moses made, and in all their greatness were looming up with more or less distinctness in his prophetic vision. But beyond all, and crowning all with a halo of heavenly brightness, there was the sure meed that must await one who, to the extent and opportunity that was given him, whether with much or with little of temporal success, has thought well and labored well for God and for man, and which is the same bright crown, whether he completes his design or falls a martyr to it.

It is a significant fact, and one that seems to me to be the finger of God pointing into eternity, that Moses was *not* permitted to see the consummation of his life-work with mortal eyes. He might behold the good land, but he could not go over Jordan. It is quite according to the analogy of God's dealings. "One soweth and another reapeth," says our Saviour. But there is another state in which "he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together," and "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." There will be no feeling of disappointment or of failure then, but we shall be receiving recompenses for things that were done when we had been lying in the grave for centuries, the fruit of the outermost branches of some tree that we planted and left a sapling. Great works rarely display their best fruits to the maker. The work stays, but the worker goes. And then, though a generation that in his life-time jeered or doubted is succeeded by another generation that sings

pæans to his name, sets up images of him, and rears monuments to his memory, what is all that to the dead dust? Life is an insolvable enigma, if there be not an eternity beyond. Moses was wise if this life is the vestibule of another; and so he believed, for he was a man of religious faith. But if after wearing out his life in toil, hardship, and trial, when if he had chosen, he might have passed it all in ease and fullness, there was nothing for him but to lie down on the cold mountain top and die, tantalized with a glimpse of the prize which he was not permitted to grasp, — what, so far as *he* was concerned, was his life but a failure, himself but a fool, and his sepulture by God but a grim and ghastly irony?

The same choice, for substance, is placed before us all, though to the most of us it is not given to act a great part as he did. There is proposed to us duty and usefulness, the service of our Church, of our country, of our race, of our age, in that larger or narrower sphere which is assigned to us, and along with this and by this, the service of God. And there is offered to us also the world and whatever enjoyment it is capable of affording us, in the glitter of its wealth, its sensuality, its honor, its magnificence, to be sought, and in some measure we may hope, obtained. The choice is free to us; and whether by some formal, conscious act, or not, we make it. And whether we choose the one or the other, we *die*. Down into the same dust go the wise man and the fool. To the fool the voice is: "Thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things." Thou hast had all the good thou shalt ever have. The good man dies, with his usefulness cut short, with large tracts of duty which he would fain have cultivated scarcely touched, his hopes not half if at all realized, his pur-

poses broken off and the thoughts of his heart; his life a fragment, a work that has never reached completion. But from the margin of the bright world beyond he looks back and sees no sigh unfruitful, no self-denial vain, no labor barren; while looking forward he sees them all running out into lines of light that run parallel with God's being and his own, brightening and brightening evermore as they run forward, into "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Finally, my brethren, if we make the choice that Moses did, we must look for our reward in the approval of God, and not in man's favor. That is scantily meted out to men in their life-time. "Ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them," says our Saviour to the Jews. So it has always been. Workers of good in this world have rarely been appreciated by the men of their own generation. On the contrary they have been misunderstood, traduced, ridiculed, annoyed, persecuted, perhaps put to death. The Lord Jesus was "despised and rejected of men," while God from Heaven was saying to those very men, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And "it is enough for the disciple to be as his master." "If in this life only we have hope," says St. Paul, "we are of all men most miserable." So it was with Moses; his commission was not recognized, his interposition was not welcomed. "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" was the peevish question that met him. They did not care to have their tranquillity disturbed even by a proposal of liberty. Slavery had taken the heart out of the people, and made them as abject and spiritless as their condition. And it was so to the very end with them. He was never, in any stage of his great enterprise, stayed up and cheered

on by a grateful and appreciative people. Throughout the history they were wayward, rebellious, disobedient, fretful, full of complaints against their leader, regardless of his counsels, ever thwarting his plans by their unbelief, their impatience, their discontent, and forcing out of him on one occasion that unadvised speaking with his lips, which cost him exclusion from Canaan. And yet, through all this fearful, wearing, tormenting opposition, the eye of God was looking out benignly upon him from the pillar and the cloud; and that gave him comfort and strength.

The lot of Moses is just what every man who aims to do good in this world must expect to endure. He must make his calculation — he will, if he is prudent — to have his measures criticised, his motives questioned, his steps watched, his faults magnified, his errors exposed, his failures blazed abroad. He will be "taken up upon the lips of talkers," and he will find almost daily occasion to pray, "Hide me by Thine own presence from the provoking of all men; keep me secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues." Yes, there *is* the presence, and that presence is the tabernacle; and so he can say, "Under the shadow of Thy wings shall be my refuge until this tyranny be overpast," therefore, "Under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice."

And thus, as Heaven must be our aim in leading a truly noble and a godly life in this world, and we must look for the completion and fullness of our final reward only within the vail, so must the favor of God, the sense of His approval reflected in "the answer of a good conscience" in our own hearts, be our comfort and stay amidst "the contradiction of sinners," which we shall be sure to encounter in leading it. They

whom we most love, whom we most desire to benefit, whom we labor most to reform and instruct and lead in the paths of a true liberty and peace, will often regard our efforts as an impertinent interference, an infringement of their freedom or their rights, and count our efforts injuries, and our friendship enmity. We shall be looked upon as dreamers and fanatics, as carried away with visionary expectations and delusive hopes, and be made the butt of ridicule and derision. But if we know that we are serving God, and for His sake seeking honestly to serve men, God's smile will all the while be upon us, and His strength will be made perfect in our weakness. And in a little time the end will demonstrate our wisdom and their folly, and extort from them the sad confession: "We fools accounted his life madness; how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!"

IV.

MOSES IN MIDIAN.

But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian. — EXODUS ii. 15.

IN fleeing to Midian Moses entered upon the second stage in his education for the great task of his life. He had known the civilization of Egypt; it was requisite that he should also know the rudeness of the wilderness, and add to the learning of books another lore not less essential to his successful performance of his work, the instruction of experience. This was to be gathered among a pastoral, nomadic people, whose learning was obtained from nature, from the stars, and from the mountains, and the sands of the vast solitudes over which they wandered. "The wrath of the king," and the ingratitude and stupidity of his own people, conspired to drive him forth. Such a distinct outcoming of Hebrew nature and Hebrew sympathies as he had displayed rendered him dangerous in the eyes of Pharaoh; while the failure of his own race to recognize and accept him in the character of their deliverer, drove him from them in disappointment and despondency. In the language of St. Stephen's speech, "He supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not." Yet neither a craven fear of Pharaoh, nor a hasty indignation at the dullness of the Israelites was the mainspring of his action, although they may well

have been its immediate incentives. A far higher and nobler principle actuated his conduct; the inward sense that God had raised him up to do His will, the ennobling belief that the work he had to do was God's, and that God would in His own good time and in His own wise and holy way, lead him on to its accomplishment. Not "the fear of man," — that "bringeth a snare;" not impatience at man, — that too misleads and warps our conduct; but the fear of God, which awed his soul into cheerful acquiescence and patient hope, led him forth into the wilderness of Midian, to complete there, under the rough tutelage of the desert, the preparation which he needed for the work, which, though it now seemed to be receding from him and vanishing away like a baseless vision, still stood before his mind's eye firm, real, certain, as the sure goal and the true meaning and object of his life. "By faith," says St. Paul, "he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." This kept him alike from hasty despair and from hasty temerity. This gave him fortitude to bear and to wait; for "he that believeth shall not make haste."

The voice within him, the voice of God, said, Go, and he went. His course lay up around the head of the Red Sea, across the isthmus, out into that wide open country, which then was and now is the capacious home of roving tribes of men, that wander at will over the vast plains and among the rugged mountains, without settled habitation, driving their herds and flocks from well to well and from pasture to pasture, with no nice ideas of the distinction of mine and yours, and yet in their own rude way courteous, generous, hospitable. We call them in our time Arabs, Bedouins; and they

are now much what they were then, for the East is as unchanging as the West is fickle.

The tribe of people on whom it was his hap to fall was Midian, then camping up in the green spot in the desert plains that lies around "Horeb the mount of God;" and he cast in his lot among them, and dwelt with them forty years, till another third of his marvelous life had passed, and another stage in his education was completed, a period surely long enough to imbue him with desert ideas, inure him to desert hardships, fashion him to desert manners. He allied himself to the people. He married the daughter of their chief, and did not stand aloof from them in haughty reserve or squeamish fastidiousness, but identified himself with them thoroughly; becoming a Midianite in Midian as he had been an Egyptian in Egypt, yet still keeping his Hebrew heart; passing gracefully and cheerfully from the complex and artificial society on the banks of the Nile to the simple and untutored ways of the children of the wilderness. Having a lesson to learn, he learned it, and he did not half-learn it. Among the Midianites he was a Midianite, and did not murmur and pine after the indulgences and elegances of Egypt. Egypt had not made him a sybarite, and now Midian did not make him a barbarian; but much good he extracted from both. That is always wisdom — ready conformity to circumstances and docility under providential teaching. And so when he came into the wilderness again, with his migrating multitude hanging upon him, he knew wilderness life, and was at home in it; he knew what to do and how to guide others in doing. And so, with his desert skill and dexterity added to his civilized knowledge and accomplishment, he was fully equipped for his great office, as the leader

of God's people, to govern and guide them in their weary march through "the waste, howling wilderness," and bring them in safety to the borders of the promised land.

The account is beautiful. Moses is himself its author. It is a bold, free sketch; a cartoon, in its strong, clear outlines more vivid and truthful than elaborate imitation. It is autobiography. How this scene of a past day rose up and stood out before the mind of the writer as he wrote! "But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to-day? And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock. And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? Why is it that ye have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread. And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter. And she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land." We see the scene — the well with its green margin in the desert, the maidens gathered about it with the flocks at the hour of watering. They are interrupted in their work by the sudden appearance of a band of rovers who contest their claim to this riches of the desert. Moses, in his costly Egyptian costume, an Egyptian in their eyes, gallantly interposes, drives off their assailants, and

does their work for them. He is brought home to their father's tent and entertained with true Oriental hospitality. He marries one of these maidens, Zipporah, the bird; one fancies that she was birdlike in voice and motions. He is adopted into the family, is identified with the tribe. He becomes a Midianite, as he had been an Egyptian. And yet there is in him still the Hebrew heart. And so when a son is born to him in the land of his exile, he calls him Gershom, stranger, to indicate that he yet felt himself a foreigner. The father of Zipporah, in this passage called Reuel, more commonly in the history denominated Jethro, is spoken of as the priest of Midian. Doubtless, he was also its chief, for in those primitive ages, the civil and the sacerdotal headship of the family or tribe were vested in the same person; the father was the priest of his house, a relation which never has been, never ought to be, wholly abrogated.

Thus was Moses domesticated in Midian; yet, as the people was migratory and without a permanent abode, we must take the term to signify rather the people itself than the region they dwelt in, which at this period seems to have been the sandy wild, with its oases and spots of green, which lay between the two northern arms of the Red Sea, and bordered on Mount Horeb. The Midianites were a numerous people, the posterity of Midian, a son of Abraham by Keturah, leading a nomadic life in the broad peninsula at the upper end of the Red Sea, of which Mount Sinai forms the centre. They were divided into several clans or families, and were much intermingled with the Ishmaelites, the descendants of Ishmael, Abraham's son by Hagar, so that the "merchantmen," who sold Joseph into Egypt, are in the narrative called interchangeably Midianites

and Ishmaelites. They formed an important division of the people known under the general name of Arabs. The mass of the race, at the instigation of Balaam the son of Beor, enticed Israel into lewdness in the desert, and were devoted to destruction by a vow of perpetual hostility; and after being fearfully slaughtered, first by Joshua and then by Gideon, disappeared, their remnants being lost in "the mingled people" that fill the extensive regions south and east of Palestine.

But the Midianite tribe with which Moses allied himself remained ever true to the alliance. It was ever faithful and friendly to Israel in the desert, closely associated with the nation after its settlement in Canaan, dwelling under its protection and on the soil of the country, though always continuing separate from it and not absorbed into its substance. Jael, who is celebrated in Deborah's song for her heroic act in the destruction of Sisera, was the wife of Heber the Kenite; and Heber the Kenite, the historian tells us, "was of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses." Hobab is another name, it might seem, of Jethro. Of this Kenite branch of the Midianitish family were, at a later day, the Rechabites. The ancestor of these, Jonadab, accompanied Jehu the son of Nimshi, and was honored with a seat in his chariot, when he rode into Samaria on his fiery errand of reform. And in the days of Jeremiah, this people were commended, and exhibited as a reproof to God's people, for their steadfast adherence to the ways and traditions of their race, and their fidelity to the injunctions of their forefather. Thus closely had this parasitical plant clung to the national stem of Israel ever since the days of Moses and Jethro. God said that Jonadab, the son of Rechab, should "not want a man to stand before Him

forever." And so lately as 1843, Dr. Wolf, in his travels, found in this very region a people who affirmed themselves to be the descendants of Hobab and of Rechab, inhabiting the very haunts which were frequented by this Midianitish race in ancient times.

We see here, first, activity presented to us as an indispensable and effective element in education. This is the great lesson taught by Moses in Midian. Head knowledge Moses had obtained in Egypt; hand work he was to practice in Midian. He was already learned in all Egypt's wisdom; he was now to be a participant in all Midian's labor. The latter was needful to give the former robustness, practical force, and substantial usefulness. Remember, God was the educator; and He knew how so to mingle and temper together the ingredients in the training as to make a man for His use, "thoroughly furnished," completely equipped for the task before him. We see how He did it; by sending him to Midian, and setting him to work. A man was needed who could endure hardness, and amidst difficulty and sore trial say, —

> "Yet I argue not
> Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
> Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
> Right onward," —

a man of nerve, resolution, energy, steadfastness, bravery. Such Moses was, but Egypt did not make him such; Midian did it. In Egypt he was a student, in Midian a worker; and in the combination of the two he became a man of wonderful heroism, and high executive power. Egypt could not do this for him. It could instruct him, it could polish him; it did. It had made him a scholar; it had communicated to him external graces and accomplishments. In Midian he led a

life of action, of care, of versatile endeavor. He was a shepherd, a herdsman. He kept Jethro's flocks. He underwent the watchfulness, self-denial, and fatigue that necessarily pertain to that calling, all calculated to toughen, brace, and invigorate his faculties of mind and body, and render him capable of strong, sustained, and persevering exertion. He could say, like his ancestor Jacob, "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and sleep departed from my eyes."

We cannot suppose that Midian afforded scope for his mental acquisitions and furniture, but it did furnish a field for the mental discipline which they had brought. It put in motion ingenuities, adaptations to circumstances and emergencies, wise inventions, it may be, for giving a tincture, at least, of Egyptian civilization to the children of the desert. Remaining in Egypt he might have been a man of elegant leisure; or with his literary resources, have lived among books, and become perhaps puffed up with knowledge, or bewildered with speculation. Idle learning is apt to come to that. In Midian his business was to do, to turn his knowledge into skill, make it practical. Had he gone out into the desert with his Israelites directly from his Egyptian experience to enter upon a life so novel and strange to him, he would have found himself all unfit, and might have shrunk from his task in dismay, or made it in the end but a maimed and unskillful performance. It is a lesson. We need knowledge; we cannot have too much of it, if it be genuine. But we must ground action upon it. We are to be workers, doers in some line of useful activity, if we would fulfill the end of our being. Neither the ignorant worker nor the indolent scholar is the man for this world, but the intelligent and in-

structed doer, whose brains prompt his hands, and whose hands second his brains.

Again, Moses in Midian is to us a pattern of a wise conformity. He did not stand aloof from the people among whom he lived in a proud superciliousness or an offensive singularity; nor did he waste his time in an idle regretting of the past, and an uncomfortable repining at the unpleasant change of his condition. He made the best of the state into which God's providence had called him, and so was neither odious nor unhappy in it. All this the history implies. He married Jethro's daughter, and he kept Jethro's flocks. An exile, he acted in the spirit of the prophet's advice, "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried captives, and pray to the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." He mingled freely with the people, conformed to their fashions, followed their ways. Our Lord was much of a conformist in His time, and the Pharisees called Him a "friend of publicans and sinners." He was their friend, but not in the Pharisees' sense. And what He practiced He recommended. He said to His disciples, "When ye enter into a house, salute it," "and in the same house abide, eating such things as they set before you." Go among the people, be familiar with them, be civil to them, and live as they do. So, too, the great Apostle St. Paul tells us that he "was made all things unto all men," and says, "To the Jews I became as a Jew that I might gain the Jews; to them that are without law as without law, that I might gain them that are without law." This is worldly wisdom, and it is religious wisdom too. We are not to rebel against our circumstances, not to dwell upon lost good, not to make ourselves studiedly different from others; but where our

lot is cast, to bring our heart also as far as it is in our power, and by a friendly communication with men around us get from them all the good we can, and by conciliating their regard and confidence do them all the good we can in return.

Finally, we see in Moses in Midian the example of a wise patience. Forty years elapsed during which his great undertaking was in abeyance, and gave no signs of an approaching resumption. In Egypt, if tidings from it reached his ears, he could hear of nothing concerning his countrymen but of the continuance of the grinding oppression under which he left his people, while he continued powerless to relieve or rescue them. When the time of action was come, God would give the signal for it. He waited for the signal, and it did not come. How often did his soul within him sigh, "Lord, how long?" Yet he did not abandon his design, or grow doubtful of its final accomplishment. He knew that "to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven," and that "it is not for us to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power." He had nothing to do but to wait, and he did wait, and uncomplainingly. How different is this from the course of many reformers, patriots, philanthropists, of whom, like some of old, it may well be said, "I have not sent them, yet they ran: I have not spoken unto them, yet they prophesied;" whose haste outruns the dilatory motion of the chariot of God, and whose eagerness chides God's delay by devices of their own, and headstrong enterprises and efforts, on which God has never promised His blessing, nor have they asked it. We are all tried in some degree as Moses was. Good things we have purposed, good things we have hoped for, do not come as

rapidly as our impetuous wishes are fain to anticipate. An unseen hand cleaves a gap across our path which we can neither bridge over nor go around. Our object seems severed from us by a hopeless chasm, and we see no way to close it. But God does; and He will close it in due time, if it be a wise design and agreeable to His mind.

"O teach Him not
When and how to hear thy prayers;
Never doth our God forget.
He the cross who longest bears
Finds his sorrows' bounds are set:
Leave all to God."

"Tarry thou the Lord's leisure; be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord."

V.

THE BUSH.

And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. — EXODUS iii. 2.

"HOPE deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life." The desire had now come to Moses. He had waited for it forty years, watching for its coming not in sullen melancholy or peevish fretfulness, but doubtless with anxious expectation. It was good for him, most salutary and needful discipline; for "it is good that a man should both hope and patiently wait for the salvation of God." "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." During all this time he had been a shepherd and a wanderer, moving from place to place with Jethro's family, and keeping his flock. His Egyptian learning and accomplishments were of little use in such a sphere. He was now eighty years old. Think of waiting to begin the proper business of one's life till that age! But as life then was, eighty was no more than forty-five or fifty is now, the prime and vigor of a man's maturity, his perfection of judgment and of action. He had only just become fit for his great office. He was all this time waiting for the signal, and at last the signal came. And it came in a double form, in a symbol and in a voice, to the eye and to the ear.

The scene of the wondrous manifestation was a fit-

ting one. "He led the flock to the back side of the desert," the side farthest from the shore of the sea, as the sea constituted its front, "and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb." "In the same school of solitude and exile which in humbler spheres has so often trained great minds to the reception of new truths, the mission of Moses was revealed to him. In that wonderful region of the earth," I quote from Dean Stanley, "where the grandeur of the mountains is combined, as hardly anywhere else, with the grandeur of the desert, amidst the granite precipices and silent valleys of Horeb," to Moses was the great truth to be made manifest which was to sustain and direct him in the hard task before him. The spot "presents that singular majesty which invests the Mountain of God with an awful reverence in the eyes of the Arabian tribes, as though a Divine Presence rested on its solemn heights. Around it, on the rocky ledges of the hill-side, or in the retired basins, withdrawn within the deep recesses of the adjoining mountains, or beside the springs that water the adjacent valleys, would be found pasture of herbage or of aromatic shrubs for the flocks of Jethro."

"Where is thy favored haunt, eternal Voice.
The region of thy choice
Where, undisturbed by sin and earth, the soul
Owns thine entire control?
'Tis on the mountain's summit dark and high,
Where storms are hurrying by;
'Tis 'mid the strong foundations of the earth,
Where torrents have their birth.

"The wheeling kite's wild solitary cry,
And, scarcely heard so high,
The dashing waters when the air is still,
From many a torrent rill,
That winds unseen beneath the shaggy fell,

Tracked by the blue mist well;
Such sounds as make deep silence in the heart
For Thought to do her part;
'Tis there we hear the voice of God."

Then and there it was that Moses heard it; and when he heard it he knew that God had called him forth from the seclusion in which he had been passing his days so long, to act again in the public eye, to take up the thread of his broken purpose once more, and with God's sanction and favor, carry it forward now to a prosperous and honorable issue. "And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him." The Angel of the Lord is the Lord — that Angel to whom Jacob prayed, "The Angel that delivered me out of all adversity bless the lads" — the manifestation of the second person of the adorable Trinity, who is the Revealer and Messenger of God to men, according as it is written, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared him." "The Angel of the Lord appeared unto him out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold" — strange, wonderful, unprecedented phenomenon — "the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." The bush was a thorn bush, some species of acacia that grows in the high regions around the base of the sacred mountain. "And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God" — evidently the same Angel of the Lord spoken of above — "called unto him out of the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And He said, Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

Loosen and remove thy sandals in token of reverence. The East is in many things the opposite of the West. We, to manifest respect, uncover the head; they uncover the feet. "Moreover, He said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows." "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt." "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

Here then we have the symbol and the voice, the apparent and the audible disclosure. It will be useful for us to consider what each of them was to Moses, and is to us; for they have not grown obsolete; they are to us all they were to Moses, and more.

The *symbolic* disclosure then was by a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: "and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." This is an emblem, and a most forcible and truthful emblem. It was fulfilled to Moses. It has been fulfilled to all subsequent ages. It is fulfilled to us. Gathering ages do but strengthen its force, and aggrandize its fulfillment. The shaggy thorn bush burns, but yet it remains perfect and unscathed. The fire

envelops it completely, and penetrates its whole extent. It stands embosomed in the flame, bathed in fire from the base of its stem to its outermost spray. And yet the flame only serves to illuminate and gild and glorify it. According to our Saviour's expressive figure, it is "salted with fire," preserved and made incorruptible by an element whose nature and ordinary office it is to destroy. The fire is all around the bush, and all through it, pervading its whole compass, and yet it remains wholly unaffected. The lambent fire plays upon its branches, but they do not kindle; not a twig shrivels, not a leaf changes color. The thorny shrub bids the heat defiance, and in its strange raiment of flame stands unhurt among the sister shrubs of the mountain side, gleaming safe in its terrific vesture of glory.

The thorn bush was Israel, about to pass through the fiery ordeal of its escape from Egypt and journey to Canaan, to whom God in this expressive symbol guarantees immunity under circumstances which could not fail to be fatal to any cause, sustained by no more than earthly forces. The wrath of a powerful king was to be encountered by a race of people whose moral energies had been enfeebled by the debasing influence of a protracted slavery, in whom the seeds of patriotism and heroic effort had died out under the iron hand of oppression. They were to cross the Red Sea without any provision of ordinary means to do it, to subsist many years without agriculture or stores of food, to encounter the opposition of fierce and warlike enemies, and win for themselves a country preoccupied by men of great physical development and vigor, skilled in the arts of war, and protected by strong defenses. Through flood, starvation, and battle they were to force their

way to Canaan, living every moment exposed to influences aiming to destroy them, and never be destroyed, bearing a charmed life amidst deadly powers. The sea opened before them. The heavens rained down food for them. The sands yielded them a daily harvest. The rock poured out water for their thirst. The giant warriors of Canaan sank beneath their sword. And "the sun and moon stood still in their habitation" to prolong and consummate their victory. In the very realm of death, "in deaths oft," in "sundry kinds of deaths," Israel did not die, but strangely grew and flourished in the fatal atmosphere, as the fresh twigs and leaves of the marvellous thorn kept their vital forces strong and active amidst the consuming flames. It told Moses that he was sent on no common errand to no common people; but to a people peculiar and exempt, possessed of a supernatural life, and, by virtue of that life, immortal, superior to the operation of ordinary causes, governed and sustained by laws special and exceptional. The fire, whose nature it is to consume all that is combustible, should find itself baffled here, and fail to consume the combustible thing subjected to its power.

Yet Israel was incombustible not because it was Israel, but because Israel was the Church of God. There lay the secret of its exemption and indestructible vitality, even in a divine principle in it, over which no earthly agency has power. The Church is always an asbestos, on which the world kindles the fires of its enmity in vain. Weak always in the elements of earthly strength, and surrounded by inimical forces far mightier, it lives, while the forces that assail it die; and amidst the rise and fall of dynasties, the ruin and decay of empires, and convulsions that have

overthrown and shattered the proudest creations of man's wisdom and power, continues in all its original freshness and vigor, a tree always burning, and yet always putting forth its leaves and branches and bearing its appropriate fruit. The Lord fulfills His promise that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," openly before the eyes of men, before its own eyes, and the eyes of the world. To what else then can we so wisely devote our powers and confide our interests? God, if we are truly of it, not only in outward form but in inward spirit, will communicate to us a portion of its own immunity. God will fulfill His promise to us that when "we pass through the fire we shall not be burned;" and our motto in life and death may be, "Cast down, but not destroyed," "as dying, and behold we live;" and then, the tree that no fire of earth had power to destroy shall be green and bear fruit forever in the garden of God.

But there was also a voice, an oral communication, and we must give heed to that. "I AM THAT I AM — I AM hath sent me unto you." This was a new name, but it was not the name of a new God. And to make this plain, it is also said, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

And here there is incidentally an intimation that these great fathers of the race were living yet and awaiting that great resurrection which shall make all contemporaries. Thus our Saviour says, "Now that the dead are raised even Moses showed at the Bush, when he calleth the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," — God still holding Himself bound to them in His promises as to living beings. A promise can have no force to nonentities.

The name was unknown to the Israelites before, as it is said explicitly farther on, "I appeared unto Abraham, and to Isaac, and to Jacob by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah, was I not known to them." I AM is the basis of the name Jehovah, and its equivalent. This new name had come into common use at the time when Moses wrote the Pentateuch, and so is employed interchangeably with the older name in the accounts of earlier times; but this was its first revelation to the Church. And it is the grandest and most pregnant of all the divine names. I AM. It means the Being who exists by no cause out of Himself, the uncaused Cause of all things; and who thus existing in and of Himself alone, was from all past eternity, is now, and shall be to all eternity to come; unchanged and unchangeable, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever;" in whom all other things that are "live, and move, and have their being;" and whose being, without succession of events, grasping the sum total of duration in its measureless embrace, is one eternal and immutable *now*. This revelation was a new step in that process of education by which the human race were gradually prepared for that highest disclosure of God's nature and will, which in the fullness of time has come to them in Christianity, the "grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ." The earlier name, El or Elohim, the strong One or the strong Ones, (the latter or plural form being, as is thought, a covert intimation of that mysterious plurality in the Divine Oneness which has its full expression in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity,) brings into view no attribute but that of strength, and sets before us God only in the character of a Being of boundless and irresistible might, the Almighty, a view

fitted chiefly to awe, and, with our sense of what we are, to alarm us. But Jehovah, the new name, is the sublimest conception of the human mind, ennobling, inspiriting, entrancing, gathering into itself the whole circle of perfections, and bowing the soul in joyful adoration before the throne of the Eternal Father.

Such then was the voice, the oral communication, supplementing the symbol, the visible manifestation, and assuring Moses that, as the cause to which he was called to give himself was imperishable and immortal, and was to triumph and prevail, so the Master whom he was to serve in it was that everlasting One whose "counsel shall stand," and whose "mercy endureth forever."

Here then we see the great leader fully equipped for his great work. His education was complete. The polite erudition of Egypt and the rough discipline of Midian had contributed each its part to his preparation. And now, he has the certainty that his work is an indestructible work, one which fire cannot consume, but only brighten, on which the world's enmity would exhaust itself in vain, and on which the labor of his life, long, wearisome, wasting, painful though it might be, would be wisely and profitably bestowed, for its intrinsic worth, and its sure and enduring success. And moreover he knows that he is to prosecute it under the superintendence and patronage of One, who, in declaring Himself to him more fully than He ever had to fallen man before, had conferred upon him a high and distinguishing honor, had displayed to him the dignity and blessedness of His service, and assured him of success and support in his task adequate, inexhaustible, and timely. "Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength,"

and "in Him is no variableness nor shadow of turning." Forty years had hope deferred made his heart sick, but the desire had come, and it was a "tree of life."

And now, brethren, surely, we need the same encouragement and consolation in our life-work, that was vouchsafed to Moses in his, and we can have them if we will. Ours is not a great work, to be sure; it may be a very small work indeed. But there is a way to give it dignity and value, to give it perpetuity and imperishable usefulness, however small it is. Connect it with the cause of God and His Church in this world, and inscribe His glorious Name upon it, and then it will never prove vain or be lost. Well does St. John say, "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever;" there is an immortality to him and his work, simplest, meanest, poorest work though it be in outward form that man can do. It is as immortal as himself. Whatever it may be, it swells the great volume of useful agency on earth; and in the eye of Jehovah, it is as much an object of observation and approval and recompense as the most conspicuous and observable service. Make your work, whatever it may be, a service, and you have put into it an element of power, of permanence, and of triumph. And it is made a service in a very simple way, merely by devoting it to God's glory, presenting it an offering to Him; so that "whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to His glory," and that not so much by a series of successive acts as by a general pervasive intention. O, then, our life is at once lifted up out of the mire and baseness of a worldly thing, and made a thing honorable and everlasting. All true service is indeed a Burning Bush. It is a contribution to the work of

the Church, and that is a Burning Bush. But the Bush is not consumed. There is not fire enough in earth or in hell to burn it up. "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;" and every man who works well in her and for her, "shall receive his own reward according to his own labor."

VI.

THE ROD.

And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs. — Exodus iv. 17.

When God installed Moses into his great trust, He gave him a wand or staff of office as its badge. But it was not the baton of a general nor the sceptre of a king. It was only the shepherd's rod with which he had been wont to tend Jethro's sheep, a plain pole of wood, that had its honor only in the wonderful powers of which it became the depository, and the high dignity of which it was made the token. In Moses' hand it became what no jeweled crosier ever has been or will be. This stick was to be not only the ensign of his power, but its instrument. With it he was to do signs. This is one of the names of miracles. Miracles are so called because as wonderful things they are evidences, indications, testimonies of the presence and operation of a superhuman influence, and thus are, or purport to be, proofs and attestations of a divine mission. Yet, as by and by we shall have reason to conclude, they may signify the former without establishing the latter; because all that is superhuman is not divine. Yet to be of God is always their ostensible purport.

So simple and homely an implement as this rod, was the instrumentality by which the prophet's miraculous power wrought and exhibited itself to the end of his

life. The very staff he carried with him in Midian went with him to the borders of Canaan; and, in all its original rudeness, as it gathered historic fame by its marvellous achievements, it grew more illustrious than Pharaoh's sceptre or the wand of Egypt's arch-magician. And in this simplicity, indeed, lay its special fitness for its office; because all men who looked upon it could see that its power was not in itself, not intrinsic, not inherent; that the extraordinary results that accompanied its use, its mysterious ability to do the mighty things it accomplished, did not reside in it, were not in the rod, but in some unseen energy that accompanied the rod and wrought with it; and that the association, which along with its use brought this energy into operation, was a divine appointment, effectual only by a self-imposed law of God's action, and conditioned in its success upon His fidelity to His own rule. "When the question arose, with what he should work signs by which his countrymen shall believe and hearken to his voice," Moses is directed to the shepherd's staff in his hand which was the familiar token of his calling. "No sword of war, such as was wielded by Egyptian kings, no mystic emblem, such as was borne by Egyptian gods, but — 'What is in thy hand? And he said, A rod,' — a staff, a shepherd's crook, the staff which indicated his return to the pastoral habits of his fathers, the staff on which he leaned in his desert wanderings, the staff with which he guided his kinsman's flocks, the staff like that still borne by Arab chiefs, — this was to be the humble instrument of divine power. In this, as afterwards in the yet humbler symbol of the Cross, — in this, the symbol of his simplicity, of his exile, of his lowliness, the world was to be conquered."

And with this simple, unpretending instrument, "mighty through God," and by virtue of a divine designation for the conveyance of divine power in doing divine work, he did do signs, signs that filled Egypt with awe and consternation at the manifested presence of a Power before which their magicians were powerless and their gods grew weak and contemptible. It "cut Rahab and wounded the dragon;" it "made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over;" it "brought waters out of the stony rock, so that it gushed out like the rivers." In the hand of Moses it was ever potent to dispel evils, to avert dangers, to overcome obstacles, to vanquish foes, to achieve victories, to create supplies, to procure blessings. Neither sword of warrior, sceptre of monarch, nor wand of sorcerer, a naked, unadorned staff of wood, significant in itself of nothing but the humble work and calling of a shepherd, it was yet all of these together and more, and did stupendous deeds, such as no one of them, nor all of them united, could accomplish.

I remark in regard to this rod, that it had no natural aptitude for its work. There was nothing in its natural qualities to distinguish it from any other rod, and its appointment to be Moses' staff of office and instrument of miracle wrought in it no physical change whatever. It was in appearance, in composition, in all its material properties, just what it was before. It was still mere wood. Sufficient force would break it. A sharp tool would cut it. Put it into the fire, and it had no such exemption as the thorn bush of Horeb. It would be consumed, exhaled into smoke, disintegrated into ashes, and lose its distinctive existence. No sign in this wood of any occult virtue, or of any special fitness or tendency to become its depository; no reason

why it should be preferred to such honor; no antecedent probability of its attaining to it. Nay, if there is room for comparison in such a matter, for a rating of comparative fitness and adaptations, the judgment must be against it, on account of its poorness and commonness. If man were to select something for God to work by, to constitute the vehicle of supernatural influences in His dealings with mankind, he would fix upon the best thing he could find, a thing that was curious, uncommon, remarkable, rare, costly, beautiful. An ordinary bit of wood fashioned into a shepherd's staff by the rude workmanship of the desert, and actually employed in that humble business, — who of all the sons of men would choose that for this distinction among created things? Not one of us would. But God did. And it was according to the analogy of His ways: and so St. Paul broadly states it. "Base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." It is God's way to do great things by weak means. That is the divine philosophy of action, the opposite of man's.

Notice, again, that God in doing His great works does not need any instruments, but uses them simply of His own sovereign will; and this appears in their obvious inadequacy in themselves to the results which they, nevertheless, produce. Hence it is that He selects for His purposes things whose inadequacy is too plain to be disputed. Moses was not indispensable to God, nor his rod to Moses, but by God's determination. All the great things that were done in Egypt God could have done without the intervention of Moses, and enabled Moses to do without the rod. He, who in the beginning made the world, and "caused the

light to shine out of darkness," can have no need of created instruments; and if He uses them, it is not of necessity, but in condescension or in wisdom.

If we look at our Lord's miracles when He was upon earth, we shall see this truth strikingly illustrated. In the variety of their methods they are so exhibited as at once to show His independence of *all* means, and His sovereign power in appointing and employing them. "If," says Archbishop Trench, "He takes anything as a channel of His healing power, — yet by other miracles of a like kind in which He has recourse to no such extraneous helps, He declares plainly that this was of free choice, and not of any necessity." And this is clearly indicated also by the insignificance of the means when they are used, and the absence of all apparent connection of cause and effect between the means and the result. A wise being, if he uses means, uses competent means, and not those that are glaringly incompetent, unless, indeed, he puts the power into the means when he uses them; in which case he is manifestly independent of them, and uses them for some other reason than because they are necessary to him. So this wonder-working rod of Moses answered simply the purpose of forming a visible link between the divine will and the effect that was produced. The rod did not do the miracle, but a Power that worked by it; and that showed itself able to dispense with it by employing in its work an instrument so manifestly incapable of contributing anything to the proposed result. Sometimes our Lord in working His miracles simply utters His mandate, and with no intermediate instrumentality accomplishes His will: He speaks and it is done. Sometimes He brings His own Person into contact with the object of His beneficent action, and

the desired effect follows. A word brings Lazarus from the grave; a touch of the bier awakens the widow's son. In one instance, at least, there is neither word nor touch. An unspoken volition restores the centurion's servant, though it is put forth at a distance from the spot where he is. When means are used, they are of the simplest character. It is the use of things without natural efficacy — the hem of His garment, His spittle, moistened earth, the water of Siloam destitute of all curative power, a few loaves employed to feed four or seven thousand men.

So in other miracles of the Scriptures. A little common salt heals the waters of Jericho; the sounding of trumpets brings down its walls; a handful of meal makes the poisoned pottage wholesome; the touch of Elisha's bones brings a man to life; the waters of Jordan cure the leprosy of Naaman; a bit of wood cast into the stream brings the axe-head to the surface. In all instances on record, if means are used, they are such means as these; they are powerless things, indisputably, notoriously powerless, like this wonder staff of Moses, so as to make it evident beyond all question that it is not the means but God that works, and that He uses them, not because He needs them, but because He has some ulterior end to subserve to which, in some way, they contribute. And thus it appears that as the rod of Moses had no power in it, so the power that worked along with it, worked in that connection only in obedience to a behest of God. God's mandate alone brought the two together, and gave them their partnership in His servant's miracles. And thus we come to the philosophy of means in the system of grace. They are visible signs of God's working, such signs as cannot work except as God works in them; and to us they are tests of obedience and trials of faith.

There is nothing quite so irrational as rationalism. To obey God is the most rational of things. And to stand arguing and questioning about a thing, debating its propriety and efficacy when God has told us to do it, is eminently irrational. Moses might have stood and said, This wooden stick cannot divide the waters, or turn the dust to flies, or make the heavens dark, or draw water out of a rock; and he would have said nothing but the truth. And yet, if Moses had thrown away his rod, he could never have invented anything else that would have done these things, and the things would have remained undone. He used the rod in all its apparent and real incapacity, and they were done. The mark of futility and unsuitableness was put upon it for that very purpose, that he might know that it could not do these things, and that God would do them by it, and would not do them without it. His religious character was thus brought to a crucial test. Of all true religion, obedience and faith are necessary parts.

We live in a day when miracles are wrought, I mean miracles in their essential quality of results produced through divine power, by means in themselves inadequate to their production. They are not, indeed, miracles of proof, not signs, for they lack visibility; at least their visibility is of too subtle a sort to be recognized without closer and more careful examination than most men are willing to bestow. Yet, when this examination is made, as by some thoughtful and patient minds it is, they become the highest kind of proof, signs eminently. There is a supernatural working in the world that the world does not take knowledge of. And it works by a class of instrumentalities that the world regards as childish and impotent. The reliance some people place upon them it counts superstition, and

derides as futile and delusive. To expect any benefit from them they consider irrational. I have already given my opinion that the most rational thing in the world is to obey God. However, these rationalizing people think they know what God ought to do better than He knows Himself. And so, if He does anything contrary to their preconceived opinion of what it befits Him to do, they will not believe that He does it though He says He does, nor believe that He so says. The measure of their belief is their reason. So they eliminate all miracle from the Scriptures, and all that is supernatural from the Church of God; and out of the poor residue they construct what they call rational Christianity, and a very mean Christianity it is — a rehash of the religion of nature, dressed out in a few Christian terms and forms. And so they illustrate very well the Apostle's saying, "Professing themselves wise, they became fools."

And there are too many Christians, who, without going such lengths, are quite too ready to criticise God's appointments, and either hold them of light obligation, or greatly underrate their value and efficacy. The Bible speaks of them, they say, poetically and hyperbolically, and men have taken it literally, and strained its sense unwarrantably. This is very much the prevalent feeling in this day in regard to all that is external and positive in the Christian religion; and our sober Church, that walks steadily in the old paths, and bears her unchanging testimony from age to age amidst the ebbs and flows of religious opinion, is stigmatized as antiquated, hide-bound, and unprogressive. God be thanked that she is. And pity it is that some of her children, not content with her sobriety, hanker after novelties, and partly in one direction and partly in its

opposite, with vagaries of opinion and practice disturb her peace. But there is a supernatural element in the Church of Christ, and God in it works invisibly by means. The means have no power in themselves; and whatever power there is in them actually is from God's appointment; and this appointment makes them both effectual and indispensable. Yet men are ready to criticise them, and find it difficult to believe that God does anything by them. Moses had the advantage of palpable and stupendous effects from his rod, which they have not. The effects in their case are subtle, spiritual, imperceptible. "The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation." And so men regard them merely as "beggarly elements," such as the Jewish ceremonies became after Christ's coming, that may be safely and even advantageously neglected; or as mere tokens, very proper to observe but of little account, and slightly connected with our spiritual welfare. "Water," say they, "cannot cleanse the soul, nor bread and wine nourish it. The touch of a Prelate can have no power to convey the influences of the Spirit to ministers in Ordination, or to lay people in Confirmation." "The foolishness of preaching," — and not unfrequently the term is just enough in its ordinary sense, we must admit, — though they have a little more faith in that, falls only on the outward ear. All these things they can dispense with, and make their peace with God by a private contract of their own on the terms of so much of the gospel as squares with the conclusions of their own minds.

Yet, my brethren, it is this very positive and arbitrary portion of God's "good and acceptable and perfect will" that is the test of our religious condition, the criterion by which we may determine whether the fear

and love of God are really in us, whether a genuine principle of obedience and faith dwells in our souls. We may keep the ten commandments and render no true obedience. So it was with the virtuous and amiable young man whom our Saviour loved when He saw him. While yet the keeping of the ten commandments is certainly an act of obedience. Just as we may "give all our goods to feed the poor," and even "give our bodies to be burned," and have not charity; and yet these are heroic and sublime acts of charity. Men may see that the ten commandments are right and salutary, and may observe them on that account. That they are such is a scientific moral discovery of theirs, and they honor it, "sacrificing unto their net," as a tribute to their own moral sagacity and discrimination. That these precepts are in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, and God spoke them on the top of Sinai, is not the motive of their compliance with them. Their reason pronounces them proper, and therefore they regard them. They would regard them if they had found them in the Koran, or the books of Confucius. There is much of this sort of virtue, and it is respectable and useful to its possessor and to society. But it is not obedience, it is not religion. Faith does not underlie it. The love of God is not its life.

Moses took his rod in his hand and with it he did wonders. He believed in it, because he believed in God, and in God's assignment of it to him as an instrument of power. And then, it was an instrument of power, a wonder staff, before which impediments vanished and foes fled away. My brethren, would we be "strong in the Lord," and "grow in grace," and render an acceptable service, we must be docile, humble, confiding, submissive. We must do God's will and His

whole will; we must submit to His appointments, and honor His ordinances — Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Confirmation, the preaching of the word. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

VII.

MOSES AND AARON.

And the Lord said unto Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. — EXODUS iv. 27.

TRUE greatness is modest. It is a false greatness that magnifies its own powers, and disparages the strength of opposing forces. "With the lowly is wisdom." "The fool rageth and is confident." When the time of action came, which Moses had so anxiously waited for, its aspect changed to his eyes, and the work before him loomed up into a terrific magnitude; he shrank from it in an oppressive sense of incapacity. There are few true and earnest men that, in view of a great work before them, however much they may have longed for it, have not experienced a similar revulsion of feeling. In distant prospect the anticipated result allures; but in the near view, the process by which it is to be obtained appalls and disheartens.

One of the penalties of greatness is isolation. It removes the man from common aids and sympathies, and sets him by himself. Greatness is lonely. The great man is alone though he be surrounded by crowds, and this "peopled solitude" is more painful and burdensome than a simple void. No loneliness is so desolate as that which is filled with an unsympathizing crowd, in which there are around us many faces, and not one that understands our case or can minister to our want.

This isolation Moses was beginning to feel, while the task before him grew awful, and swelled into a frightful magnitude. Solitude, and that isolation which is worse than solitude, — separation from the insight and sympathy of men around us, — is weakening. Moses grew weak and drew back. For this great want of His chosen servant God graciously provided a remedy in sending to him his brother Aaron, to be his associate, to supplement his deficiencies, and by timely counsel and coöperation cheer his soul, and strengthen his hands.

Of the marvellous powers which his shepherd's staff had acquired as a rod of miracle, as well as of the novel capabilities of which his own person had become the possessor by virtue of his commission, as an additional encouragement, God was pleased to vouchsafe him an immediate and preliminary specimen in wonderful works, which were to be rehearsals, as it were, preparatory to the great drama soon to be acted on the soil of Egypt. The latent powers in his rod and in himself, of which his commission had given him no consciousness or intimation, were brought at once into action and made palpable, as a sample of the might that should subsequently display itself in the execution of his task, in order that he might move forward to it with cheerful alacrity and unshrinking courage.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And He said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent. And Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers,

the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee. And the Lord said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry ground, and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry ground."

Yet with these clear assurances of gifts adequate to his work, as the great enterprise rose up before him in its terrible magnitude, his soul shrank back; yet not with the shrinking of an unworthy cowardice or a selfish love of ease, but with that deep, genuine, enlightened humility which drives the feeble creature to the Almighty Creator, that out of weakness it may be made strong; not with the "show of wisdom in a voluntary humility," that, to cover an inward reluctance, asks time to bury a father or bid farewell to a household, but with the honest self-distrust that fears not the pain, or the labor, or the loss, or the infamy, but only fears its own incapacity, and the disgrace its failure may bring to a service that it loves. To the effectual discharge of his office nothing seemed to him more important, in connection with the requisite intellectual and moral endowments, than that free and facile use of the faculty of speech, by which alone they could

have adequate and effective expression. In this Moses felt himself to be deficient; and the sense of the deficiency lessened his hope of success. "And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since Thou hast spoken unto Thy servant." He had felt no new gift of ready utterance springing up within him since his call, to qualify him for its duties. Still was he, as he had ever been, the enforced keeper of mute inarticulate thoughts, that could gain but feeble and insufficient vent by his lips. It is a great torment to have thoughts that you cannot get out, and that either die within you in silence, or are marred and spoiled in the attempt to set themselves free. Thinkers are not always speakers, nor speakers thinkers. Nay, thought in its very striving after accuracy and exactness, is apt to be a hindrance of fluency. Moses could think and act, but he could not speak. He was a greater man than his brother, but his brother was a better speaker. He could excogitate the ideas, and his brother could put them into words for him.

God is economical in His bestowments, and seldom heaps His manifold favors on one man. The command simply is, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." In this distribution of gifts there is laid the basis of a mutual dependence and helpfulness which is most salutary, as well as for that system of compensations by which God's benefits to men are more nearly equalized than shallow thinkers suppose. Moses was wise, and brave, and energetic, but he could not speak. In this respect he is not alone among great men. St. Paul tells us that his "speech was contemptible;" and he was no man to indulge in

the pettiness of a mock modesty. He could even *boast*, when there was need of it, though he might seem to "speak as a fool." Cromwell, whether a good or a bad man, was certainly a great man; yet out of his tangled utterances it was hard to come at his meaning. Moses continues, "I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue." The Douay version (following the Vulgate) has it not badly, "I have more impediment and slowness of tongue;" the call, if it had not increased his defect, had rendered his consciousness of it more lively and distressing. "The Lord said unto him, Who made man's mouth? or who made the dumb, and the deaf, and the seeing, and the blind? Did not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." The words have their parallel in our Lord's promise to His disciples, "It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak;" "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist." But the promise failed to reassure the heart of the chosen messenger; alas! for human weakness and infirmity, the imperfection of the great and good! It is a comfort to common Christians to see the best so much like themselves. These faithful biographies of the Bible are a great help to us in this way. "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a

mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God," that is, thou shalt be the vehicle by which God will convey to him His mind, which from thy lips shall come to him with a divine veracity and a divine authority.

Here, then, the want was supplied, and with it, as appears in the subsequent history, a much broader surface of want besides; for God is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," and is "wont to give more than either we desire or deserve." The abundance of His mercy will not be kept within the narrow bounds our mean desires and conceptions set to it, and overflows in accordance with its own intrinsic riches. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Moses has now a coadjutor and a colleague, yet one who should act in due subordination to his supreme control. His elder brother Aaron is sent to him to be with him and share the burdens of his commission, and supplement his work, when his aid should be needful. The sending is recorded in our text, which, though it occurs farther on in the narrative, evidently refers to this point of time, though its priority does not appear, owing to the indefiniteness of the Hebrew tenses, which our translation has failed to rectify. Brothers in the flesh, they were to be also brothers in labor, and by unity of purpose and distribution of service, lighten and enliven its heavy tasks.

Moses, in the guise of an Egyptian, and as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, had learned to recognize and love his brother Aaron under Amram's roof; and there, in the common endearments of Jochebed, fraternal affection between the young Levite and the Egyptian prince, in his visits to his mother-nurse, had been nurtured for uses of which neither of them dreamed. How much of this provision for a secret future is there

in the lives of men. What important effects to the end of life may flow from the seemingly casual associations and intimacies of childhood! And now, the old love, after their long separation of forty years, awoke anew, as by God's call they met in the wilderness beneath the shadow of Horeb; and, as two drops by contact become one, it strengthened into a unity that never failed till the life that ended on mount Hor left alone, for a little time only, that life which ended over against Beth-Peor. This companionship at once delivered Moses from his solitude, the isolation of peculiarity, by raising up for him a co-worker, to stand with him on the same elevated plane above the mass of the people, and aid him in bearing cares on which none but one so commissioned might presume to intrude. Aaron did some work better than Moses could, and Moses did his own work more easily with Aaron's sympathy and accordance. "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward of their labor." "Iron sharpeneth iron, so doth a man the countenance of his friend." "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel." Yet the supremacy always remained with the younger brother, without arrogance on his part or envy on Aaron's. "Though the latter was by his primogeniture the Chief of the tribe of Levi, as the head of the family of Amram," and, in the beginning of their joint embassy, the most conspicuous, as he who "spake to the people and to Pharaoh all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses," and "did the signs in the sight of the people" as the deputy of Moses, while Moses fell into the background; yet "was Moses the inspiring and informing soul within and behind throughout." And, as the history wears on, Aaron becomes

decidedly secondary, and Moses is the grand, majestic figure of the story. "Moses, the dumb, backward, disinterested prophet, continues, for all ages, the foremost leader of the Chosen People," the nation's human father, "the witness that something more is needed for the guidance of man than high hereditary office, or the gift of fluent speech, — a rebuke alike to any age that puts its trust in priests and nobles, and to any age that puts its trust in preachers and speakers." Here, then, was unity with subordination, and harmony with distribution and diversity; and thus the apparatus of action for the great enterprise was complete.

Aaron the Levite here comes before us then. Let us say a few words about him. We cannot dissever him from Moses, so closely joined to him was he, and so conspicuous in his bearing upon his brother's subsequent career. He is called in our text the Levite. But to be a Levite was not then what it was afterwards, when the Levitical tribe became the priesthood of the nation. Levi had not yet begun to be an honored tribe. It was the action of these brothers, and of their tribesmen under their influence, that, later on, made it honored. Aaron was the elder of the two sons of Amram, three years older than Moses. The two brothers and their sister Miriam were all the children of their parents. Miriam's name, in its modern forms of Maria and Mary, honored yet more in being borne by our Lord's mother, is in common use among men still. Aaron, "like many eloquent men, was a man of impulsive and comparatively unstable character." He lacked the firmness of his brother, and was incapable of that endurance of loneliness and temptation which is an element of real greatness. He was true to his brother, and was content as a satellite to

shine in his light, and see his own light veiled in Moses' rising splendor. The two brothers were counterparts fitting nicely to each other, each supplementing the other's defects, and making, by their union, a complete agency. Aaron, as the first-born, was the tribal superior; but he recognized his younger brother's divine commission, and in deference to it was content to hold to him a secondary place. When subsequently in the desert the tribe of Levi was made the sacerdotal tribe, the descendants of Aaron were the priesthood proper, and the first-born among them in a direct line was to be the high priest. There were in it thus the three orders of the high priest, the priest, and the Levite, type of our Christian hierarchy. His want of firmness made him an accomplice of the people's sin in making the golden calf, when he no longer had his brother to lean upon. But his repentance and return to duty, through the intercession of Moses, the type of the "one Mediator," procured his pardon. In the double capacity of priest and deputy, he accompanied Moses henceforward in his journeyings, till at length in Mount Hor he died, in the presence of Eleazar his son, and Moses, cut off, like his brother, from the sight of the longed-for land, because of his unbelief and rashness at Meribah. By the Psalmist he is called "Aaron the saint of the Lord," and to the maimed and spotted saintliness which is all that man attains here, his title is indisputable.

See here the good of association. See how it raised Moses out of the ague of despondency that overtook him when the object of his long desire had at last come within his grasp; how it warmed his powers into resolute endeavor, and shed a benign influence upon his subsequent labors and sufferings. So "Jonathan,

Saul's son arose, and went to David in the wood, and strengthened his hand in God." So, too, our blessed Lord thought of this principle and acted upon it, and stamped it with the seal of His infallible wisdom, when He sent out His disciples two by two, making but six missions, where an earthly wisdom would have thought it better economy to make twelve. And the great St. Paul had always with him Barnabas, or Mark, or Luke, or Gaius, or Epaphroditus in his missionary travels and labors. It is a valuable lesson, and it should not be lost upon us. It teaches us the value of society and coöperation in all labor, and especially in Christian labor. "Society," says Lord Bacon, "redoubleth joys, and cutteth griefs in halves." It is dreary business to be alone in a difficult undertaking, and a man's strength, if he has no companion in it, is but half drawn out for its performance. Let us remember that in the divine household we are knit together into one fellowship, and are to learn to be mutually considerate and helpful, and "bear each other's burdens," as "every one members one of another." God's work, our work, will be done more easily, pleasantly, effectually.

See here, too, the good of subordination. Aaron was always with Moses, his shadow or second self; but Moses always was head. If both had been heads the machinery would not have worked so kindly, smoothly, and comfortably. Nothing does well with two heads. It is a monster, neither comely nor productive. In that closest and most equal partnership of human life, the matrimonial, the Scripture is careful to say, "The husband is the head of the wife." And when that divine order is subverted, the subverter is neither happier nor more respectable. God knows what is best for us, and it is our wisdom to acquiesce in His arrange-

ments. It is the beauty of our ecclesiastical system that it has a recognized head. And other polities, that have no such wise provision, are driven by necessity to a tacit recognition of some virtual head, some Moses, who is leader, if not by office, by eminent ability, around whom its Aarons cluster with a homage more profound than any that superior office calls for. The heads, domestic, ecclesiastical, civil, God's wisdom provides for us, let us cheerfully recognize and honor; and remember that a planet in its orbit is beautiful; but a planet shooting madly from its sphere is a portent of evil, and "with fear of change perplexes monarchs."

VIII.

THE CIRCUMCISION AT THE INN.

And it came to pass, by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him. — EXODUS iv. 24.

As Moses, in obedience to the divine command, after his forty years' sojourn in Midian, was returning to Egypt, an incident occurred which is certainly mysterious in its character. Yet the mystery is not of very difficult solution; and when solved, the fact to which it relates becomes both monitory and instructive. At an inn on his way God sought to kill him; that is, perhaps, He sent upon him a sickness of a deadly nature, which threatened to be fatal to him, in order to awaken him to a sense of a neglected duty. The omission of duty, to admonish him of which this seemingly deadly infliction was sent upon him, was, as the sequel clearly shows, the failure to circumcise his son. The inn was probably a caravansary, and not at all an inn in our sense. Such an inn it was that, ages after, could afford no room for Mary, when, on the eve of our Saviour's birth, she went to Bethlehem to be enrolled for the taxing. Such inns the traveller now finds in the changeless East; and there are in the East no others, save in a few places where European usages have intruded, and Japhet dwells in the tents of Shem. A caravansary is, as its name imports, a place for receiving and loading caravans. It consists of a large quadrangle

or court surrounded by a range of buildings. Here the caravans rest for the night; and here are provided accommodations for man and beast, where both may repose and refresh themselves with such provisions and means of subsistence as they bring with them for the purpose, for the place itself furnishes nothing but lodging and water. At such a place it is generally supposed to be that Joseph's brethren had paused when they found the bundles of money in the mouths of their sacks. Such a place is also called a khan, though the latter is more strictly an accommodation for travellers in a town. This is the inn of the East. Some, however, question whether even this existed so early as the time of Moses; and whether the inn in our text was anything more than a halting-place in the open country, some customary station for caravans and travellers on the route to Egypt, chosen for its proximity to water and pasture, where journeyers on that route were wont to pitch their tents and pass the night. Its precise character is, however, quite immaterial. At some stopping-place, we naturally suppose near the beginning of his journey, "the Lord met Moses, and sought to slay him." A violent sickness, as it might seem, or some other threatening visitation, overtook him, sent upon him by the hand of God, and brought him into imminent danger of death.

The Lord sought to kill him. This is human language. So the language of Scripture is wont to be; and when used in reference to the Divine Being, it is anthropopathic. Human language is the language of appearances; it describes things by their aspects, and infers intents from indications. We cannot for a moment suppose that the Lord had so soon grown weary of His great design, and in hasty petulance had re-

solved to destroy the instrument He had Himself raised up and fashioned to execute it. The design to slay Moses was contingent, and not absolute. A timely correction of the error at which it was aimed might arrest it, as it did, and as God foresaw that it would. So are God's purposes of eternal life or eternal death, in respect to us all, conditional, and the oversight of this truth is the fundamental and fatal flaw of Calvinism. God's "thoughts are not our thoughts." His "thoughts are very deep," and "past finding out." He is not changeable; for "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him?" He is "without variableness or shadow of turning." The change is in us; and the change that seems to be in Him is like the apparent motion of the sun, which, while it reposes in an immovable stillness, seems ever moving to the restless and fickle orbs that dance their ceaseless circuits beneath its rays. When we speak of the Infinite Mind our words are but the babblings of children. Our wisdom is in silence. God sought to slay Moses, as our Saviour "made as though he would go further," when he had walked with the two disciples to Emmaus. His dealings bore that aspect to the eyes of men.

The prompt interposition of Zipporah averted the danger. Both the sons of Moses were born before he left Midian. St. Stephen's apology affirms that while "he was a stranger in the land of Madian, he begat two sons." One of these sons, probably the younger, Eliezer, had not been circumcised. How Zipporah connected this fact with the danger of her husband does not appear. A divine monition may have suggested it. Probably, conscience had an agency in bringing it to her mind, since at her door the fault may have lain. It may be that Moses interpreted to her the meaning

of his peril. The religious character of Moses had deteriorated in consequence of his protracted sojourn in Midian, and the influence of his Midianitish wife. This being "yoked together with unbelievers," how dangerous it is! How difficult for one who is involved in it to maintain his integrity! What the religion of Midian was at this time we are not informed. Probably, it was that earliest and mildest form of idolatry which confounds the forces of nature with nature's God, and either sinks the Divine Personality in His works, or multiplies it according to their variety. Yet to this mild idolatry the rite of circumcision did not pertain, although it was not unknown to others of the people of the East besides the Israelites, and was maintained especially by those of them who derived their descent from Ishmael. As a necessary consequence, its spiritual and symbolic significancy was not understood or recognized by them; and its effect, as the seal of God's covenant, could not be appreciated and duly valued by those to whom that covenant was unknown. To them, therefore, it must have seemed a mere senseless superstition, as St. Paul calls it after the Messiah had come, and the Christian circumcision of baptism had taken its place, a "concision," that is, a useless and ineffectual cutting of the flesh. The influence of Zipporah would naturally operate against its observance, and in the instance of her second son, at least, it had prevailed. Moses, as years wore on, became more and more a Midianite; and as the dream of his early days faded away and grew dim, and he saw no tokens of its realization, he might naturally come to attach less consequence to that ordinance which marked its recipient as one of the peculiar people to whom it related. He saw not his tokens, and though his purpose

never forsook him, it grew faint, and in part, at least, obsolete. If then, we suppose a considerable time to have elapsed between the birth of the two sons, we find in the opposition of the mother, and the waning zeal of the father, a sufficient solution of the neglect that was at last so severely reproved. But now God calls the sin to remembrance, — the unbelieving resistance of the mother, the weak compliance of the father, — and Zipporah, in a paroxysm of repentance and alarm, takes a sharp stone, and performing the rite with her own hands, casts the bloody token of it at her husband's feet, and says, "Surely a bloody husband art thou to me, because of the circumcision." Some say that the word here rendered husband, more strictly signifies a bridegroom. And then the sense will be that she had espoused him to her a second time, and made him hers by a fresh marriage, with the blood of her son.

It is noticeable here, that the rite — which yet is clearly recognized as possessed of all the spiritual significancy and effect that properly belong to it — was performed by a lay person, and that person a woman. Circumcision seems, indeed, never to have been confined in its administration to the priesthood, and at this time there was no formal priesthood in Israel. There was no priesthood then but that which pertained to the head of the family. The theory has been held that an essential priesthood attaches to all the members of the Church of God; though it is restrained in its ordinary exercise to an order of men specially set apart for it. On this, or on some other ground, the validity of baptism by whomsoever administered has been commonly held in all branches of the Catholic Church. Hooker, whose name is almost always coupled with the epithet

judicious, and whose opinions are ever regarded as of peculiar weight, commenting on this very case, thus expresses himself upon the point: "The sequel thereof," that is, of the occurrence, "is a plain argument that God was satisfied with what she did, as may appear by His own testimony, declaring how there followed, in the person of Moses, present relief of his grievous punishment, upon her speedy discharge of that duty, which, by him neglected, had offended God; in which, not to make that a reason of the event which God Himself hath set down as a reason, were falsely to accuse whom He doth justify, and without any cause to traduce what we should allow; yet seeing they which will have it a breach of the law of God for her to circumcise in that necessity, are not able to deny but circumcision being in that very manner performed, was, to the innocent child which received it, true circumcision, why should that defect, whereby circumcision was so little weakened, be to baptism a deadly wound?" The principle is one of wide application. That which ought not to be done, and is done in violation of a rule, may, nevertheless, be valid when it is done, and effectual to all the purposes contemplated in the act.

But men will be ready to say that the punishment was disproportionate to the offense, much beyond its desert. I should rather leave that point to God's judgment than attempt to settle it by my own. So, too, we hear it said, that eternal penalties are too great for human sin. How do you know that? "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him?" There are a good many men that talk very much as though they were of God's privy council, and He could not get on very well with the government of the universe without them. But I

know that to obey is always rational, and to disobey is irrational, when the command is God's. And I also know that in a small disobedience is the germ and essence of all lawlessness; according to our Saviour's words, "He that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much," and the saying of St. James, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

And I know, further, that a law, the fitness and utility of which we cannot discover by our natural reason, is more a test of the spirit of obedience than a moral requirement that commends itself to our judgment as good and proper; because our compliance with the latter may be but a compliment to our own intelligence, and not at all an act of deference to the divine authority. Of what use is circumcision to the child? Or what good can it do to apply a little water to a child's face? Both are physical acts, and the heart is the seat of religion, and they cannot reach the heart. Surely, the guilt of neglecting such rites as these, if there be any, must be very small. But though the rite is of small account intrinsically, that which it represents and effects is not of small account. It is not of small account that ourselves and our children should be in the Church of God, and have, by covenant with God, a part in its rich privileges and blessings. And God can surely appoint His own form of entrance into it, and His own mark of membership in it. And if we will have the benefit, we must conform to the terms on which it is conferred. And surely, to refuse to obey when God tells us to be members of His Church, and so His children, sharers in the peculiar blessings of his family, is not a small sin, but a great sin, and one that well deserves condign and severe punishment. Yet

this is just what we do when we refuse to be baptized, or to have our children baptized, as of old it was with an Israelite when he neglected circumcision. It is trampling on God's love, and spurning His favors; and though He may not now, as in old time, visit our offense with physical disease or other visible inflictions, He will surely not hold us guiltless; and if we are still His servants, He will be apt to chasten us, that we may "not be condemned with the world." And the balances of a higher equity than ours will find us wanting, and God fully justified in the severity of His righteous judgments.

Sickness, or danger of death in some form, is here sent as a reminder of a past neglect of duty. Is not this often its office? Is it not a wise thing in men to receive it in this character, as a monition to "think upon their ways, and turn their feet unto God's testimonies;" to institute the inquiry into the past to which it calls us, and rake among the ashes of departed days for those omissions of service which have challenged God's displeasure, and which, as our life is passing away, call us so loudly to "redeem the time," and to "repent and do our first works," too long left undone? In this case the monition was specific, and pointed to a particular of duty that had been slighted and disregarded. And where there has been some one great omission on our part, its message may be in our case also thus special and exact. But if it point only to arrears of duty of a less definite sort, a general negligence or slackness in keeping God's commandments, and filling up the measure of our obligations in relative life and in the Church of God, it still calls us to retrospection, and should awaken in us Job's inquiry, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me?" "I have sinned:

what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men?" Nor shall we need to seek long; for though, in the heyday of health and occupation, our lives, in that cursory review which we sometimes take of them, may look fairly; to the conscience softened by retirement and suffering, and lightened by the beams of that foreshortened eternity which sickness brings near, the revision will reveal a general shortcoming, a fearful mass of neglect and failure, which loudly calls for confession, contrition, and amendment.

And in many instances the revelations will point to that very department of duty in which Moses had been wanting — an underrating of what is positive, ceremonial, outward in religion, which men of moral and decorous lives too often venture to speculate about and hold in low esteem. We are living unbaptized ourselves, "strangers to the covenants of promise;" or we are letting our children grow up unbaptized, while Jesus Christ is saying to us, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," and has pointed out to us, with sufficient clearness, the door by which we are to come. We are staying away from the Lord's Supper, while He is saying to us, "Do this in remembrance of me," "All things are ready," under some pretext of engrossment in worldly cases, or of waiting for a fitness, which, in that indolent waiting, most assuredly will never come; or we are indulging in some self-conceited, intellectual disparagement of all ordinances, which, cover it up with whatever profession of spirituality we will, is a virtual claiming to be wiser than the Master. But when God seeks to slay us by bringing upon us that which seems to be intended to slay, and whose office it is to slay, so that He makes as though it were His purpose to slay us, we may appro-

priately ask, whether there are not flaws in our obedience, defects in our rule of duty, or neglects in our conformity to it, to which He is calling our attention, and which, if life is given us anew, it should be our first business to cancel and correct. When "he is chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain, so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat, — lo, these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living."

But when there is not this direct menace of death, other forms of trouble may serve the same intent. The sickness and death of children or other friends are solemn calls to reflection; and in them, also, "God requireth that which is past." When her son's life was in danger, the woman of Zarephath exclaimed to Elijah, "Art thou come to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" The impending stroke touched some old sore in her past history, and awakened her to the recollection of violated obligations. Alas! what life is there that has not its old sores, upon whose tender cicatrices such visitations may impinge, and arouse mournful and mortifying retrospections? And other sorrows come also with their monitory lessons; life is full of them.

But it is far better, surely, to forestall such medicinal sufferings by a voluntary revision of our lives, and a voluntary supplying of those things that are wanting, by a remedying of neglects as far as it can be done, a supplying of deficiencies as far as opportunity is given us. Much of this "redeeming the time" may be effected by a wise and timely investigation of our affairs, and an earnest endeavor to remedy their faults

and omissions. And then, when God comes, not to make as though He would slay us, but to slay us in truth, we may look back on our lives in peace, and in humble hope and resignation say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

IX.

MOSES BEFORE PHARAOH.

And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go. — EXODUS v. 1.

MOSES was again in Egypt after forty years' absence from it; but Egypt is not now the same to him, nor he to Egypt. He did not don again his old Egyptian attire, but came as an avowed Israelite. Familiar things were around him. There were the same sluggish Nile with its green border, the stately city with its towers and palaces, the huge bulk of the pyramids, the tapering, upward-pointing obelisks. Among the moving crowds there were faces that he had seen in days past, while many such were no more seen. The Pharaoh before whom he was to stand was not the Pharaoh that he had left upon the throne; for the history is careful to tell us that "in process of time the king of Egypt died." But the change had brought no relaxation of the yoke that rested on the Hebrews, for it is added, "And the children of Israel sighed by reason of their bondage." Nor did it encourage the ambassador of God to hope for a more lenient reception at the court. The old Pharaoh might have had some lingering regard for his daughter's favorite; but the new king could only remember him as a scion of a base stock engrafted into the royal tree, envied at first, and then rejected with shame.

The sense of his high commission enabled him to discharge the duty it laid upon him with dignity and boldness. The sinking of heart that had seized him upon its first announcement had passed away; and in its place had come "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." He was ready to stand before the king and deliver the message with which he was intrusted with the composure and determination which suited the champion of the burning bush, and the envoy of Jehovah, I AM. And he was, moreover, no rude rustic, who brought into the presence of royalty the rough manners of the wild. He trod the halls of state with the confidence and ease of one accustomed to them; to whom they had been a home; who had grown up in their atmosphere; who was familiar with their etiquette, their forms of reverence and address, and whose free bearing amidst their pomps and splendors gave evidence that the Hebreo-Midianite shepherd fresh from the wastes of Horeb, was but a resuscitation of the Hebreo-Egyptian prince, though his garment was the shepherd's tunic, and his truncheon but a shepherd's staff. Thus a man of the servile caste, strangely uniting the garb of the wilderness with the demeanor of the court and the solemn boldness of a prophet of God, stood before the Egyptian king whose kinsman, by adoption, in other days he had been, the companion and the playfellow of his youth we may suppose, and — unabashed and unawed by his splendor and his power, brave for God, brave for his people, with no cringing entreaty, or timid deprecation, but with a voice and tone of high authority — said to the monarch, "Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go." Surely, here is work for the painter and the poet, as well as for the expounder of

things divine. The veil that hides the real and gives speciousness to the false, falls off, and, as "Herod feared John," and Felix trembled before Paul, so Pharaoh quailed before the helpless Hebrew that so boldly withstood his tyranny. It was not the king on the throne, but it was the king at the foot of the throne, whose mandate comes forth with royal succinctness and with royal majesty, "Let my people go."

Aaron was with him; but the relation he sustained to the work is marked, as it is throughout the narrative, by the order of the names, Moses and Aaron, — never Aaron and Moses, — a companion, an associate, but only as a helper, a support, a spokesman, though Aaron was the elder. Now Moses for the first time felt the benefit of his brother's presence and company; how, while it added nothing to the real strength of his position, nor diminished his personal responsibility, it did lighten his burden, and enable him to discharge his office with more of comfort, ease, and tranquillity. There are chords in our nature that vibrate mysteriously to another's touch, a magnetism that works by laws imperfectly understood, by which the presence and sympathy of a companion, silent though it be, and without visible action, braces and enlivens the heart; and that, though the disparity be so great that the inferior who cares for us can only think as we think, and feel as we feel, without any contribution of useful counsel or active succor. "At my first answer," says St. Paul, "no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." How the pang of it sticks in his mind! And what a heightening of our Lord's desolation is there in the statement, "Then they all forsook Him and fled!" And what pungency of reproof was there in His glance, when He "turned and looked upon Peter," not

standing with his Lord and owning Him in His terrible extremity, but warming himself at the fire at the other end of the hall! Let us not say that we cannot help our friend because we are inferior and of small resources. It is too often but the cover of cowardice or coldness of heart. He that knows the magic there is in a look, a touch, or a word, to alleviate and quicken a pained or fainting soul, feels the falsehood. Nor let us, in our height of pride and self-sufficiency, despise the "fellowship of kindred minds" because they are below us, and, it may be, without manifest strength to aid. "Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power." God chooses "the weak things of the world;" and if He has chosen them they are no longer weak. The interdependence of men is well-nigh limitless. "The head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you." There is not one of us that ever undertook to do a difficult or disagreeable thing, that did not find it easier to do it if we took some one with us, though he did not lift a finger or speak a word. A little child's sympathy is not to be despised. Moses' commission was sole, but Aaron's presence facilitated its execution. There is a wonderful power in company.

And "Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." But surely, the petition here does not tally with the errand on which they were sent. It falls far below, indeed, the scope of their commission, and the purpose of God expressed in it. They were sent to deliver Israel from bondage, and lead them to the land promised to their fathers; but they content themselves with asking for them permission to go three days' journey into

the wilderness and keep a sacred feast. This seems a lame and impotent conclusion of their grand embassage. Has Moses, at the very outset of his great work, grown so cowardly and faint-hearted as to allow his aims to shrink into this scanty boon? Is he so intimidated by the presence of great Pharaoh that he dares not deliver his message, and covers up his delinquency under a petition for a favor so far inferior? Is a three days' journey into the wilderness to keep a feast, all that oppressed Israel needs, and Moses is sent to demand — so small and temporary a lightening of the burden of their servitude — such a transient taste of the sweets of liberty and recreation? Rather are we to see here a wise economy of reserve; and the wisdom is not man's, but God's; not Moses', but His in whose name Moses acted. For Moses delivered his message to Pharaoh, not in his own words, but in words which God had put into his mouth, — "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel." God had fixed the scope of his petition in the language in which He had couched it for him. It is not Moses, but God, then, that thus seems to trifle with the interests of His people, and lower their righteous claims. What he asked was but an installment of his full demand. Surely it was not fear, it was not caprice, it was not deceit. It was wisdom. It was God trying Pharaoh, to see what was in his heart, towards God, towards men; educating Pharaoh, if he would be educated, if he would suffer the light to shine into his mind and change his soul, and train him to higher works of obedience and philanthropy. It was initial, tentative, benevolent; and had not its gracious tendency been frustrated by Pharaoh's pride and obstinacy, it might have resulted in great good to him as well as to Israel.

What Moses first asked of Pharaoh for his people, then, was a religious privilege — liberty to go out into the wild country beyond the bounds of Goshen, and worship God; sacrifice to that great Being in whom their fathers had trusted, but whose image, we may well believe, had grown dim among them during their long period of depression and enslavement. That God had come to be their Deliverer, and fulfill the promise of which the bones of Joseph in their midst were the perpetual pledge, they were taught to believe. But before He entered on His work, it was needful that their dim thought of Him should be revived and brightened, that they should know him better, and have the languid spark of faith and devotion in their souls quickened and strengthened. For this purpose, the first boon Moses sought for them at the hands of their sovereign, was liberty to go out into the open country beyond the precincts of Egypt, and, without molestation or offense, celebrate the rites of their religion, and keep a joyous festival of sacrifice and praise. Moses was a religious reformer. The revival of truth, faith, and loyalty to Jehovah, lay at the bottom of all the other great things he was to do for them. The feast in the wilderness was preliminary to all that was to follow, to stand as the frontispiece of that series of wonderful events in which their deliverance was to be accomplished, the prologue of the great drama of their entrance upon national life. Appropriately was it the first step in that emancipation which Moses contemplated and designed to effect, just as every true leader in the Church of God, and especially in every important juncture or crisis of its history, cares for its spiritual interests first, and bases all effort for its temporal welfare upon a quickened sense of God and the relations it sustains

to Him. The delay was not a waste of time. It was better for Pharaoh and for the people. To him it presented an opportunity of relaxing his stern rule, and undoing his tyrannical grasp by degrees, such as an abrupt presentation of God's demand upon him in its fullness would have been far less likely to have effected. And to them it was education, the first lesson in a course of instruction, by which they were to be fitted for the honorable station they were appointed to fill.

To Pharaoh, in this call, there was a test of faith, and of that obedience in which all real faith finds its true expression. God came forth from His obscurity and spoke to him. Would he hear that voice, recognize it as the voice of Him who is "King of kings," "by whom princes reign," and before whose supreme greatness the sons of men, "high and low, one with another," stand on the same level? Would he acknowledge himself a dependent and subject creature, and bow to the divine behest? True, he was a heathen, and prided himself on being the child of the sun. But heathenism, in all but its most abject forms, does not obliterate the sense of a supreme Divinity. In humanity there is a chord that ever vibrates to God's touch, and an ear that hears His voice. Not in vain was God's message sent to another heathen monarch. At Jonah's call the king of Nineveh arose from his throne and put on sackcloth; and a threatening danger was averted. Would Pharaoh recognize in the God, whose message Moses brought to him, a Divinity greater than the deities of his country, the "gods many and lords many" to which civilized and enlightened Egypt offered their unworthy homage, a Divinity whose very conception proved itself true, asking such a service as an intelligent being can alone fitly render?

It was the call of God's mercy to Pharaoh, Jehovah's coming near to him to do him good. Alas! he "knew not the time of his visitation." Had he known it, how different might have been his history! What miseries might have been averted, what blessings gained! He would not have lived to see his kingdom desolated by a series of awful plagues, and his first-born smitten before his eyes; and to be reserved himself to perish in the whelming waters of the sea, and leave his name for a curse unto God's chosen. These awful crises in the lives of men, how often are they unnoticed and disregarded. And then what remains but the wail, "O that thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belonged to thy peace; but now are they hid from thine eyes."

But if the heart of Pharaoh towards God was tested by this call, so was his heart towards man. It was an appeal to his humanity. Relief was asked for a large body of useful slaves, a brief respite from their wearing toil, and for the holiest of purposes, even to afford them an opportunity to worship their national Deity. Was there any chord in Pharaoh's heart that would respond to the appeal, that would vibrate to the touch of human sorrow and suffering, and prompt concession to their claims? Or had the soul of the pampered king, in affluence and splendor and sensuality, in unlimited indulgence and the wantonness of despotic power, grown callous to all such pleas, and in the self-idolatry which a solitary exaltation too often begets, come to think the toil and pain of unthanked and uncompensated vassals but a fit offering to its greatness and its pleasure?

Thus the request addressed itself to the humane feeling, as well as to the religious sense of the king,

and, alas! with the same result. To the divine claim he returns only an insolent defiance, — "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." To the human yearning he gives only the harsh requital of an increased severity, — "Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labor therein, and let them not regard vain words." Pharaoh failed under the test. "Weighed in the balances, he was found wanting," by moral weight "altogether lighter than vanity itself." And this critical failure was the prelude of that long series of downward steps which ended in the fatal disaster of the Red Sea, and the passage of his disembodied spirit unprepared into the presence of its Maker. Had his answer been different, how different, also, might have been the result to himself and to his kingdom. Israel, by what steps it is useless to conjecture, might have gained their liberty and leave to depart peaceably, the land been saved from impoverishment and deadly disgrace, Pharaoh have found an honorable place among the benefactors of the Church, and Egypt have obtained in spiritual advantages far more than an equivalent for her material loss. How much often depends for the individual and for others upon his single determination! How often a step fixes a man's subsequent progress to good or evil, to salvation or perdition!

See the wisdom of acting in great matters with judgment, moderation, and patience. Many a good design has been ruined by abruptness, haste, and grasping greed. Moses did not succeed in his embassy, but he adopted fit and judicious methods to obtain success; and if they failed to secure their object, it was simply because they encountered an opposition that no power

or skill could overcome. The eagerness that will have all at once, loses all. The impatience that will reach the goal at a single bound, never reaches it. To have asked the immediate emancipation of the Israelites would have been manifestly useless. To ask a smaller favor that might have ultimately led to it, afforded the only reasonable chance of achieving a victory. No wise man will attempt to split a gnarled block, and rive apart its twisted and interlocking fibres, by forcing into it the broad end of the wedge. He will insert the thin edge; and then if he fails, it will, at least, not be owing to his own lack of sagacity, or his awkwardness. Nowhere is this caution more appropriate than in the concerns of the Church, so often marred and subjected to defeats by the headstrong and clumsy workers that undertake to care for them. When we cannot get all we would, let us be content to aim at getting what we have reason to believe that we may. It may be a step to advances that will accomplish our complete wishes in the end. In our work on souls, in our work for religious objects, let us never "despise the day of small things." A lodgment for a truth in a mind, the awakening of a right aspiration, the introduction of a salutary habit, is a great thing. Our Saviour counsels against putting new wine into old bottles. Make gains as you can, and let gains be stand-points for new efforts in your own heart, in the souls of others, in the interests of Christ's kingdom, and, by and by, your full wishes shall meet a due fulfillment.

Finally, beware of striving against God. It can end in nothing but destruction. Its gains are losses, its successes its most ruinous failures. To Pharaoh it seemed a successful assertion of his kingly authority, to put down the first symptoms of a rising aspiration

after liberty in a race of serfs, led on by an adventurer who came with the pretext of a divine commission. But it was Pharaoh's misfortune that the commission was real, truly divine, and that thus in thwarting Moses, he put himself in an attitude of rebellion against a Greater than Moses, even that God of Israel who laughs to scorn the efforts of all puny enemies, and in the temporary victories that He sometimes allows them, makes their destruction in the end more signal and complete. Wretched victories, indeed, are those in which God, under the disguise of some instrument of His, is the defeated party. Such victories, in sufficient numbers, are but a "heaping up wrath against the day of wrath." All Pharaoh's troubles began in this most unhappy triumph. See well to it that that which you oppose has not God for its friend; for if it has, you can never succeed against it, and you will plunge yourselves into remediless perdition.

X.

THE TALE OF BRICKS.

There shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks. — EXODUS v. 18.

THE intervention of Moses in behalf of his people was not, at first, attended with happy results. The people themselves were abject and spiritless, and Pharaoh was stubborn and unyielding. The condition of the Hebrews grew worse instead of better. They did, at first, welcome Moses as their deliverer; but as soon as they found that their deliverance was not to come by an immediate exertion of Almighty power, but to be wrought out in patience, and labor, and suffering, they hugged their chains, and desired to be left undisturbed in their bondage. They reproached their benefactor with augmenting and aggravating their distress, and said to him, "Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians." Meanwhile, Pharaoh, alarmed at the prospect of losing so large a number of useful servants, attributed, or affected to attribute, their discontent to idleness. He increased their burdens to crush out the rising spirit of resistance, while he characterized the brothers as the fomenters of dissatisfaction and disorder. "Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their work?" "Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labor therein, and let them not regard vain words."

We are told that, when "Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people, the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that He had looked upon their afflictions, then they bowed their heads and worshipped." But when they saw that Pharaoh was inexorable, and their tasks were augmented, and that no power was put forth by Moses to effect their rescue, a revulsion of feeling ensued; they clave to their servitude, and reviled their deliverer as having, under the pretense of relieving them, made their bondage heavier: "The Lord look upon you and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us." And even Moses, disheartened by his ill success and the gloomy aspect of affairs, "returned unto the Lord and said, Lord, wherefore hast Thou so evil-entreated this people? why is it that Thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast Thou delivered thy people at all." Surely, the work in this aspect of it seemed like a very signal failure.

And yet, it was but passing through a stage as helpful to its ultimate success as any other. Great enterprises are wont to encounter such checks in their initial stages. The worm that is to be a butterfly must go into the condition of a chrysalis, and lie motionless, and seemingly dead. The seed that is to be a plant must "fall into the ground and die." Men want the rapid, the grand, and noticeable; and the "kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation." Naaman will have the prophet "come out and call upon the name

of his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper," but the prophet only sends him to wash in Jordan. When the Jews "thought that the kingdom of heaven should immediately appear," they cried, Hosanna; but when no such kingdom as they looked for came, they cried, Crucify Him! Men desire deliverance, but they do not like the process of deliverance. They would have the crown, but they will not take the cross. Yet such checks are tests of character, trials of men's faith and earnestness; and God is apt to place them at the outset of undertakings for Him, that men may learn what spirit they are of, and ascertain whether "with ten thousand they are able to meet him that cometh against them with twenty thousand."

The occupation in which the Israelites were chiefly employed during their servitude, was that of making bricks. The Egyptian brick was sun-dried, like the adobe so extensively used in the Spanish portions of America. But it was of a better quality, and more durable, though it was not baked in a furnace. Made of the tough slimy mud of the Nile, and hardened by exposure to the atmosphere in that dry and sunny land where rain never falls, it was strong and firm, and capable of lasting for ages. Specimens of it remain, indeed, to this day, wrought, it may be, by Hebrew hands when Israel dwelt in the house of bondage, bearing inscriptions and figures as fresh as they were when they were first impressed; and which are now of historic value as records of ancient days. Learned men in Europe and America are now poring over and laboriously deciphering the marks of these Israelitish fingers. In the composition of the bricks straw was used to bind the clay together, and prevent cracking

while they were drying, as hair is now employed in mixing mortar. As brick-makers, the Israelites were useful slaves; and this was their principal employment. "They fulfilled their daily task" under the superintendence of task-masters, to whom, at evening, the "tale of bricks" was delivered, told out, that is, or counted as the sum of their appointed labor. Those who, in the history, are called "the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's task-masters had set over them," seem to have been trusty persons of their own number, selected as overseers, to act in subordination to the Egyptian functionaries in keeping the men at their work, and securing its faithful performance.

Hitherto, the straw for this work had been supplied by the government; but now that these useful slaves had presumed to petition, through their audacious leader, to "go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice unto the Lord their God," the suspicion arose that their work did not sufficiently absorb their time, and that the leisure it afforded them was turned to evil purposes in concocting sedition, hatching dangerous ideas of liberty, and fostering mischievous projects of revolt and escape from their bondage. So the straw was withholden, and they were told to go and get their straw where they could find it, while yet not aught of their work should be diminished, but the tale of bricks was to be punctually delivered; so that, in this more complete occupation of their time, no space might remain for them to "regard vain words." They were now "scattered abroad over all the land of Egypt to gather stubble, instead of straw," from the grain fields whence the crops had been reaped and carried away. In vain; the tale of bricks could no longer be rendered by their overtasked powers. Yet all their remon-

strances were vain. Tyranny is not nice in its measurement of the capabilities of human thews and sinews. They were beaten, and charged anew with idleness, and they saw that "they were in evil case, after it was said, Ye shall not minish aught from the bricks of your daily task." And now the people, that a little while ago believed in the divine mission of Moses, and bowed their head and worshipped at his gracious announcement of their approaching emancipation, break out in querulous charges against him for having, by his ill-timed interference, turned their hitherto tolerable bondage into a crushing and unendurable oppression. While Moses, in disappointment and dismay at a result so contrary to his hopes, exclaims, "Lord, wherefore hast Thou so evil-entreated this people? why is it that Thou hast sent me?"

Besides this labor in making bricks, the Israelites seem to have been employed in the potteries. There are two allusions to this in the Book of Psalms: "His hands were delivered from making the pots," in the eighty-first, and "Though ye have lain among the pots," if this be the true rendering of the passage, in the sixty-eighth. And it is also said that "they built for Pharaoh treasure-cities, Pithom and Raamses," places apparently on the northeastern border of the country, and included in that land of Goshen which was assigned to their ancestors for their habitation. In these cities the produce of the neighboring region was stored up for preservation and traffic. So that it might appear that these brick-making serfs were likewise employed in brick-laying, and constructing buildings out of the productions of their enforced industry.

Such was the bondage under which the children of Israel groaned in Egypt; and the intervention of Mo-

ses in their behalf at first aggravated instead of relaxing its pressure, to his and to their surprise and chagrin.

We see here, as it seems to me, the course of human things presented to us, as it were, in an allegory, or rather a large class of cases set before us in a single case. Great undertakings are wont, in their initial stage, to prove abortive, meet with serious rebuffs. This is almost always true of things that are really good, and that are to end in anything really great. It is an ordering of Providence. It serves to test the sincerity, zeal, and belief of men. The first consequences of Moses' action in behalf of his people were disastrous to them, and produced a disheartening effect upon him and upon them. And now, suppose he had yielded to this disheartenment, and abandoned his enterprise as hopeless. The Israelites would not have become a nation. They would have humbled themselves before Pharaoh, and he would have given them straw again to make brick. They would have remained brick-making slaves; and in the end, have become mingled with the Egyptians, and passed out of sight. Moses would have fallen a victim to the king's wrath, or have made his escape into Midian, and lived there as the son-in-law of an Arab chief, and died, and been forgotten. But he was of another mind, of a braver and more resolute spirit, a man of mettle and of faith. He did not despair of a cause because it had met with a reverse. He believed that the cause was God's. He believed in himself as God's instrument to make it victorious. He believed in his own mission as having in it such clear marks of a divine origin that he dared not question or distrust them. Why God thus seemed to falter and forsake His own work he could

not tell. But he knew that God does not change, and that none of His purposes shall fail. "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth that He doeth." Here was a rock on which his feet might stand firmly. He stood upon it, and it did not fail him. Nay, in the questionings which arose in his mind he became more conscious of the depth of his convictions, and the strength of his purposes. And in the exercise they gained greater depth and strength. And so he arose to renew his struggle with fresh vigor; and with renewed evidences of the divine favor and assistance, he prosecuted it to an illustrious success. The people caught his resolution, followed his guidance, and grew from a race of slaves to a numerous and powerful nation.

Now I have said that this sort of discipline is common; and doubtless it is needful and salutary. A defeat at the outset, duly used, is the security of an augmented success. If men easily yield to discouragements and appearances of failure, they will accomplish little in this world; and no interest that is committed to their charge will thrive. It is the man, whether it be in secular or spiritual concerns, who rises superior to defeats, and, conscious of rectitude and a worthy aim, still presses onward with the unabated energy and unwavering intent, that wins the victory in the battle of life. The stumblings of early and untried endeavor, the poor results of first essays, are the needful checks of self-complacency and self-confidence; and to genuine faith and earnestness they are the spur to quicker action, and the stimulus to firmer resolve. They throw the soul off of itself and on to its God; and then, when it finds that it can do nothing of itself, it learns that it can do all things through God's strength made perfect in it.

And all this is not without its special instruction for you and for me, my brethren, in the parts we respectively bear in working out a greater salvation than the deliverance from Egypt, escape from a worse bondage, and the acquisition of "a better country, that is, a heavenly."

To me, indeed, the experience of a now lengthened ministry should have taught wisdom in this, as in other regards. Yet, at no age is the trial that is ever repeating itself, though it be with diminished force, an unprofitable subject of contemplation — the trial of an over-sanguine expectation followed by painful and disheartening failure. Yet, to those who are nearer to the outset of their work than myself, is it doubtless more needful. Such an one, starting with a full, strong confidence in his own sincerity and earnestness, with an implicit belief in his own commission, with a loving acceptance of the truth he is to teach, with a firm reliance on the pledge of God to help him, and a faithful improvement of such aids as man can give to make him "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed," looks for large and speedy results. "The weapons of his warfare," "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds," he wields with a resolute and hopeful arm. And he certainly thinks that he shall make a breach in the castle, and force it to surrender. But he soon finds that it laughs at him, and stands as serene and safe as though he had never assaulted it. There is not even a dint upon the wall. "The strong man armed keepeth his house, and his goods are in safety." He looks at him over the rampart with placid contempt. He has to do with one whose heart is harder than Pharaoh's; and discovers that he "wrestles not with flesh and blood," but with "spirits of wickedness in high places," who

will not succumb to his stripling summons or stripling force. And now comes the hour of despondency. His ministry is a failure. He is nothing; he can do nothing. Men will not heed his message. He has mistaken his calling. He has run before he was sent. What a comfort it is for such a man to hear so great a man as Moses groaning out, "Why is it that Thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name he hath done evil to this people; neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all." Perhaps all the fruit he sees is an increase of stubbornness and opposition. And he ought to be encouraged by that; for it is a sign that he is making himself felt, and will, by and by, gain the victory. Dean Stanley quotes an old Hebrew adage bottomed on this very story: "When the tale of bricks is doubled, then comes Moses." And it is true in all ages. We are not to stir up the world's enmity; but if it is stirred up, it is our opportunity. Let him remember that great Goliath laughed at David at the first, but, by and by, he lay a gigantic corpse at David's feet. Be of good heart, my brother. "The trial of your faith is more precious than of gold that perisheth." Try it again. "Thou shalt see greater things than these." "God will help thee, and that right early." "And thou shalt come again with joy, and bring thy sheaves with thee."

And you, my brethren, you too need this same word of warning and of encouragement. There are few that enter upon a Christian life without somewhat extravagant expectations; few that do not find the stubble instead of straw, added to their tale of bricks; and that do not fall, in consequence, into temporary discouragement. And this is specially true if their first repentance has been of an emotional character. It

may be that the seed has fallen on shallow ground, and withers because it has no root. But if it has root, if the ground is good, and they have root in themselves, they are still liable to be misled by delusive anticipations, both of holiness and of happiness. The idea of the religious life which they have in their minds is right, but they find themselves very poor realizations of it. Satan does not let go his hold upon them abruptly. Their own life is not fully redeemed from their "former conversation," or its habits of feeling and action. And the world has not left off its blandishments and its menaces in despair. Alas! alas! they soon begin to think such freedom is little better than the old bondage. And they mournfully raise the question, Is the bondage broken? My dear brother, it is. There is yet the sea to pass, and the desert to traverse, but Canaan is beyond. Faint not, but work still. Soon thou shalt be there.

XI.

THE PLAGUES.

For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. — EXODUS ix. 14.

To examine what are commonly called the plagues of Egypt in detail, would occupy too much time, and prolong this course of lectures beyond reasonable bounds. I shall content myself with a general view of them, such as can be presented in a single lecture, pointing out their purpose and significancy, and the lessons which they teach.

And here it may be well to notice, at the outset, the character of these plagues in their special adaptation to the people on whom they were sent. They are Egyptian; not only as Egypt was the land on which they were inflicted, but as they pointed directly at Egyptian customs, beliefs, and ideas, and were intended to demonstrate the poverty of those things in which Egypt most gloried and confided. "It is impossible," says the Dean of Westminster, speaking well, and more wisely than he sometimes does, "as we read the description of the plagues, not to feel how much of force is added to it by a knowledge of the peculiar customs and character of the country in which they occurred. It is not an ordinary river that is turned into blood; it is the sacred, beneficent, solitary

Nile, the very life of the state and of the people, in its streams, and canals, and tanks, and vessels of wood, and vessels of stone, then, as now, used for the filtration of the delicious water from the sediment of the river-bed. It is not an ordinary nation that is struck by the mass of putrefying vermin lying in heaps by the houses, the villages, and the fields, or multiplying out of the dust of the desert sands on each side of the Nile valley. It is the cleanliest of all the ancient nations, clothed in white linen, anticipating, in their fastidious delicacy and ceremonial purity, the habits of modern and Northern Europe. It is not the ordinary cattle that died in the field, or ordinary fish that died in the river, or ordinary reptiles that were overcome by the rod of Aaron. It is the sacred goat of Mendes, the ram of Ammon, the calf of Heliopolis, the bull Apis, the crocodile of Ambos, the carp of Latopolis. It is not an ordinary land of which the flax and the barley, and every green thing in the trees, and every herb of the field, are smitten by the two great calamities of storm and locust. It is the garden of the ancient Eastern world,—the long line of green meadow and corn-field, and groves of palm, and sycamore, and fig-tree, from the Cataracts to the Delta, doubly refreshing from the desert which it intersects, doubly marvellous from the river whence it springs. If these things were calamities anywhere, they were truly 'signs and wonders'—speaking signs, and oracular wonders—in such a land as 'the land of Ham.' If some of them are but aggravations of natural evils not before wholly unknown, not the less are they the interventions of a Power above the power of man,—not the less did they call the mind of the Israelite from dwelling on his own strength and glory, to the mighty Hand, and

the stretched-out Arm, on which, alone, through his subsequent history, he was to lean."

The threat was, "And against all the gods of Egypt will I execute judgment;" and it was most signally and literally fulfilled. There was nothing that Pharaoh and his servants counted sacred, precious, or venerable, that was not smitten, polluted, and abased. Egypt stood aghast while the invisible Jehovah, whom only the most abject of its inhabitants adored as their Deity, waved over the land the sceptre of a might before which the divinities, enthroned in their proud temples, and honored with the choicest offerings of their wealth and devotion, trembled and fell in impotent submission.

The plagues of Egypt were ten in number, as they are described by the historian; the blood, the frogs, the lice, the flies, the murrain, the boils, the hail, the locusts, the darkness, and the death of the first-born. The Psalmist, in his enumeration, omits the boils, and somewhat transposes their order; but his object is not historic accuracy, but poetic expression; and to this, order and completeness were not essential. Thus the Psalmist sings: "Then sent He Moses His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen. And these showed His tokens among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He sent darkness, and it was dark; and they were not obedient unto His word. He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. Their land brought forth frogs; yea, even in their king's chambers. He spake the word, and there came all manner of flies, and lice in all their quarters. He gave them hailstones for rain; and flames of fire in their land. He smote their vines also and fig-trees; and destroyed the trees that were in their coasts. He spake the word,

and the grasshoppers came, and caterpillars innumerable, and did eat up all the grass in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. He smote all the first-born in their land; even the chief of all their strength." Some of these inflictions were purely supernatural; others were natural phenomena, intensified so much beyond all precedent, as to indicate, just as plainly, the immediate action of divine power; while their rapid succession, the accumulation of so many horrors in so short a space of time, without sufficient respite to allow the stunned and tormented sufferers to recover their self-possession, compelled the king and people to exclaim, as did the baffled magicians, "This is the finger of God." How fresh the memory was in the Jewish people ages after; and how instinctively, as it were, the national mind ever fell back on this signal espousal of their cause, as a ground of encouragement and hope, the Psalmist's words just quoted, whether the poet be David or another, and other allusions in the Scriptures, sufficiently evince.

The first plague was that of blood. It fell upon the Nile. "Moses lifted up the rod, and smote" the river, "and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood." The bloody fluid was nauseous and unwholesome. "The river stank," "the fish that were in the river died," and the people digged pits for water to drink. Egypt could not have been touched in a more sensitive spot. The Nile was not only her wealth, but her very being. Take it away, and she was an arid plain, not habitable. She had deified the river, and Nilus was one of her gods. But now her god was loathsome, and the fetid current carried with it only disgust and death. She was proud of her river, and boasted of it as her noble possession. The prophet

Ezekiel makes her to say, "My river is my own, and I have made it for myself;" but now the true God teaches her that it is not her own, that He has made it; and to rebuke her pride and impiety, He turns it into her torment and disgrace.

A week elapses; the stubborn heart of Pharaoh refuses to yield, and the plague of frogs is sent. From the waters, that are now restored to their natural quality, frogs come up and cover the land of Egypt. The land has always abounded with these creatures; but now they are preternaturally multiplied. The river will no longer retain them; but they swarm in myriads everywhere, and there is no escape from their annoying and offensive presence. They are found in the bed-chamber of the king, and in the very ovens and kneading-troughs in which the bread of the people is prepared for their support. Here, again, the religion of the people was touched. The frog was a sacred animal, sacred to a goddess, who was represented with the head of this reptile. To kill it was sacrilegious; and yet to live in the midst of its swarming multitudes was hideous. The creature so senselessly deified, a real God had made their scourge.

The heart of Pharaoh now relents a little, and the frogs die, and in putrid heaps pollute the land. But as the nuisance departs, the king's heart grows hard again; and a third plague comes, the plague of lice. The bodies of men, and of all living animals, are invaded by the filthy parasites. No art or industry can remove them. They cleave to the flesh like the shirt of Nessus. None are exempt. The king shares them with the beggar, and palaces can no more exclude them than hovels. The bodies of nobles and fastidious women are masses of crawling vermin. The Egyp-

tians were a people of scrupulous cleanliness, distinguished in this respect among Eastern nations. They made it a religious duty. But the very priest can be religious in this way no more. The tiny persecutors cling to him in the very act of performing his sacred functions. Life is loathsome in all its ranks, and in all the departments of its work. A religion that they despise turns the observances of their own superstition into contempt and shame.

Still Pharaoh's heart is hardened; and as the visitation abates, the old unwillingness asserts its power. A fourth plague treads, therefore, close upon the steps of its departing predecessor. The flies come in countless swarms. They are everywhere. No precautions will exclude them. The very air is crowded with their moving masses. They may have been stinging insects, a species of gnat, and their venom would drive men frantic with pain, the intolerable suffering that fills the day and deprives the night of repose. Or, if it were nothing more than the common house-fly, multiplied so immensely, the distress would be inconceivable. Entering into all the orifices of the body, the eyes, the ears, the nose, the mouth, mingling with all food before it could be appropriated, they would make life a burden. Now, for the first time, we hear of the special exemption of the Israelites, by which the miraculous character of the visitation becomes plainer. We do not discover so distinctly how this plague impinged upon the Egyptian religion, but it doubtless had its point of contact. Evidently it is in its effects a horrible infliction.

Now Pharaoh relents so far as to permit the proposed sacrifice to be offered; but they must keep the feast only in Egypt, and without going to the desert.

But such niggard compliance will not appease the divine anger. The flies are gone, but a fifth plague quickly follows, in the form of a murrain on the cattle. It seizes all the domesticated animals in which the wealth of the nation so largely consists, so requisite to its industry in most of its departments. The food of the people is cut off. Their husbandry is interrupted. Transportation ceases. The land is filled with the stench of decaying carcasses. Dismay seizes all hearts. Impoverishment and want, as the result of the loss of so essential an element of the public riches and activity, stares them in the face. The sacred bull Apis languishes and dies in his splendid habitation. "But of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one."

But the king's heart is not subdued. And now a plague is sent upon the bodies of men, into their very flesh, the sixth in the dreadful catalogue. The dust of the earth was thrown into the air, and it became "a boil with blains breaking out upon man and upon beast." "Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life." Hitherto human life has not been directly assailed. Now death strode through the land with fearful violence. Perhaps this was the disorder which is called the plague, and is attended with painful swellings. Pain and loathsome sores fill all places. The land is a lazar-house of disease and suffering. The Egyptian gods can neither protect their votaries nor heal them. The great God who kills and makes alive, sways his awful sceptre in defiance of them. But there is no sickness in the land of Goshen, while the magicians, who boasted their supernatural powers, had no exemption.

Pharaoh is unsubdued, however, and a seventh plague quickly follows, the plague of hail. Rain is

almost unknown in Egypt. The prophet Zechariah speaks of "the family of Egypt that have no rain." Yet now a storm of hail descends upon the land with a terrific and destructive violence, accompanied with fearful electric phenomena, to increase the consternation. Egypt had never seen aught like it. "There was hail, and fire mingled with the hail." A terrible devastation was the consequence. The rich vegetation of the country was marred and ruined. "The flax and the barley were smitten," and the flax was one of the most valuable productions of the country; as Egypt was famed over the world for its fine linen. The very nature of the country seemed to be transformed. An omnipotent Hand was cutting off the sources of its prosperity, and stamping new laws on its soil and atmosphere.

Pharaoh bows before the dreadful visitation, and asks the prayers of God's messengers; and they are heard. "The hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth." Quickly, however, his heart revives, and he is again the same frontless, God-defying Pharaoh. And then the locusts came, the eighth in the dismal train of evils, to destroy "all that the hail hath left." The calamity is not novel; and even in its common occurrence, "the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness." But now it is intensified. Its scope is wider; the ruin it works more complete. The battered fragments of vegetation that have survived the hail vanish before it, and nought remains but a naked desert. Egypt's gods are powerless, when Israel's God is angry.

The king's heart quails under this infliction, and he asks again the intercession of Moses and Aaron. At

their entreaty the storm ceases; and then, again, Pharaoh is as bold and obdurate as ever. His stubbornness now brings the ninth plague, that of darkness. Egypt was a worshipper of the sun. He was counted among her principal deities; and with her almost cloudless sky, she basks continually in his genial beams. But now his light is withholden. The god no longer smiles upon his votaries. "A darkness that may be felt" envelops the whole country; only "the children of Israel have light in their dwellings." No artificial illumination avails much to alleviate the horrible obscurity. The functions of life are suspended, and its activities stand still in the appalling gloom.

One more plague remains, the tenth, and the greatest, the death of the first-born. Pharaoh, after the awful darkness, cowers before the blast and concedes all that God's servants ask, only requiring, that the flocks and herds of Israel which fed in the green pastures of Goshen untouched by hail or locusts should stay behind as hostages for their return. But this qualified consent will not avail. In the dark night the angel of death spreads his wing over the land; and when the morning shines, "there is not a house in all Egypt in which there is not one dead." Pharaoh's heir lies dead in the palace; and no meanness of condition can shield any from a stroke that is "no respecter of persons." There is "a great cry in Egypt," a cry of agony and frantic terror. "Jehovah has conquered; his people are free." The mandate goes forth, Depart; and "Egypt is glad at their departing, for they were afraid of them."

There was, in this wonderful series of inflictions, a striking demonstration of the power of a personal God over the forces of nature. And this, perhaps, was its

great lesson. Idolatry confounds God with His operations and productions, merges God in nature, and elevates nature into God. Modern rationalism resorts to the same device. And so long as the forces of nature work evenly and customarily, the cheat may be made specious. But when God arises in His majesty, asserts His supreme dominion, interrupts the course of nature, bends her laws as nothing before the might of His irresistible will, then He stands revealed, as here, in His separate, individual, absolute essence, and we hear His voice saying to us, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, and I will be exalted in the earth."

Not less clearly appears from this history the folly and madness of placing ourselves in opposition to God, and resisting His will. What intense folly, indeed, is it for the creature to match himself with the Creator, — the puny creature with the omnipotent Creator. "Who hath hardened himself against Him, and prospered?" "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth; but woe to the man that striveth with his Maker." The impious presumption can end in nothing but defeat, disgrace, and ruin. "The angels that kept not their first estate," fallen from their glory, are "reserved under chains of darkness, against the judgment;" and if we will rebel, we shall go to seats "prepared for the devil and his angels." Beware! His strength, against us, is ruin; His strength, for us, is salvation. Let us not brave his wrath; but rather, while we may, "let us take hold of His strength that He make peace with us; and He shall make peace with us."

XII.

THE MAGICIANS.

And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments. — EXODUS vii. 22.

ALL that is apparent is not real; and all that is superhuman is not divine. Under the one or the other of these categories fall the wonders counterwrought by the magicians of Egypt, to neutralize the force of the "signs" done by Moses; and upon either of these principles, much more upon the two combined, the phenomena they displayed are sufficiently explained.

All that is apparent is not real. To this principle is to be referred what is embraced in the domain of magic. These magicians of Egypt were practitioners of magic, and this, if the formula laid down be just, lay essentially in the practice of impositions on the senses of men. These are skillful illusions, by means of which, under the pretense of supernatural powers acquired by commerce with the spirits of the dead or other intelligences of the spiritual world, an insight into truths not accessible by the ordinary means of information, a superhuman foresight of future events, and a mysterious power of exercising influences of various kinds on persons and substances, are supposed to be obtained. These powers are indicated in audible sounds, articulate, or, at least, intelligible to the magician, produced by ventriloquism or some other occult power, or in sights that cheat the eye, effected by leg-

erdemain, by a dexterous and rapid manipulation of substances, that eludes the observation and scrutiny of the beholder. Magic has existed, under various forms, in all ages and countries; but in all its diversities, it is comprehended under the description that has been given.

The language of Scripture in speaking of such manifestations, we are to remember, is optical. The Bible speaks of physical things as they seem to be, not as they are, when it is dealing with them in connection with those great spiritual verities of which it is the vehicle. In its phrase in reference to such subjects, that is which seems to be, and that is done which seems to be done. And so it does not bind us to the belief in witchcraft, as having existed in former ages as a reality, so far as relates to its claim to powers derived from the invisible world. It sets it before us only in its phenomena and its pretensions, without raising the question of the truthfulness of the one or the other, the reality of what it does, or the source of its power; and it denounces God's judgments upon it, which are equally deserved, whether it is a real thing, or an impious imposture. And when it says, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," it sets forth a crime that for its heinousness is made capital, without determining whether it consisted in acts of a supernatural character done by powers actually drawn from the spirit world, or only in the semblance of them, set forth as done by powers which are really feigned and false. Nor is the case of the witch of Endor an exception. For this woman, it might seem, even from the face of the narrative, was not prepared for the actual appearance of Samuel. Her incantations, by a special divine interposition, accomplished, or seemed to accomplish, more

than she anticipated from them. She had thought only to satisfy the wretched monarch who had invoked her aid, by her usual device of muttered sounds, produced by ventriloquism, and interpreted by her as a message from her "familiar spirit," when, lo! Samuel himself appears, sent by God, not called up by her spells, to tell the king his doom; and she, in her amazement at an occurrence as strange to her as to him, cries out for fear. The "familiar spirit" was some departed soul, or other spiritual being, with whom the magician professed to have made a compact, and through whom he pretended to obtain access to the secrets of the hidden world, and exercise a superhuman power over earthly beings and substances.

The various names by which the practicers of these nefarious arts are designated, point, in one way or another, to the nature of their pretensions. The terms witch and wizard signify a wise one, and point out the person as the reputed possessor of an unearthly knowledge. The magician is one who practices magic; and this gets its name from the magi of Persia, who were supposed to be the depositaries of a more than mortal intelligence. The necromancer gathered information by commerce with dead men, as the word, in its Greek derivation, manifests. The astrologer, the star-gazer, the monthly prognosticator, gathered his inspiration from the stars and the moon, which were supposed to be inhabited by spirits, and by their changes and motions told tales of the future, and revealed wondrous things to those who were initiated into their mystic lore. The sorcerer derives his name apparently from a Latin word which signifies a lot, and refers to the practice of casting lots as a means of prying into future results; but it seems to be used chiefly with reference

to the supposed power of producing illusions of the sort which the Scotch call glamour, — a charm on the eyes, making them see things differently from what they really are. An enchanter is so called from the chanting or incantation which accompanied magical performances, and was supposed to aid in their efficacy, as the song of the witches in Macbeth. Nor is it necessary to suppose that these practicers of magical arts were always conscious impostors. Oftentimes, no doubt, they became dupes of their own wretched arts, and believed in themselves, and came to regard themselves as veritable mediums of communication between this world and the world unseen, "sporting themselves with their own deceiving," as St. Peter expresses it, even as "evil men and seducers" are wont to "wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." These arts were, in some of their departments, indeed, reduced to a "science, falsely so called;" and their professors, like these Egyptian magicians, were honored in the courts of princes, and trusted by the noble and learned. The delusions they have created have lingered on, even among Christian nations, to modern times, and have not been unknown in our country, both in days past, and in our own times.

Of this practice of magic, a principal means of deceiving men was jugglery, that sleight of hand by which changes and results are produced with such marvellous rapidity and subtlety of motion as to elude the sight of the spectator, and leave him utterly at a loss in regard to the process by which they are brought about. How remarkable these illusions may be, whether connected with any claim of supernatural agency, or honestly exhibited as the simple products of a peculiar human skill, and how completely they set

at nought the attempts of the untaught to account for or explain them on natural principles, is well known. The sharpest observation often fails to detect the method, and the most ingenious logic to assign adequate causes to the effects. Multitudes of those who pretend to no other than human powers, exhibit before our eyes phenomena that utterly baffle our attempts to investigate and solve them. Reasonable, then, is it to conclude that when inexplicable effects are displayed in connection with higher pretensions, they are of the same character — illusions, deceptions, practiced upon our senses by human powers, in the employment of which some extraordinary and unaccountable skill has been developed by processes concealed from our knowledge.

Of this latter class, we may well believe, were the wonders wrought by these Egyptian magicians in imitation of the miracles of Moses. They professed to be endowed with supernatural powers, and their claim was accredited, for such was the popular belief. Very possibly, too, they believed in themselves, and supposed themselves to be in possession of powers which were communicated to them from the invisible world; and that the faculty they knew themselves to possess of doing things that quite transcended the ability of ordinary men, was a gift directly bestowed upon them by the deities of their country. It was an attempt to match the gods of Egypt with the God of Israel, and to prove, by marvels similar to those done by Moses, Pharaoh's right to set His demands at defiance, and disregard the bold requisitions of those who came to him in Jehovah's name. These men occupied an honorable position at the Egyptian court. The names of two of them are given us by St. Paul, where he says

that "Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses," doubtless handed down in the traditions of the nation. The sacred account informs us that when Aaron, at his first entrance into Pharaoh's presence, "cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, it became a serpent. And the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods," in token that, even in the height of their apparent success, Jehovah asserted His superiority. And again, when the waters of Egypt were turned to blood, it is said that "the magicians did so with their enchantments." And once more, under the plague of frogs, it is recorded that "the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt." But here their power, whatever it was, had reached its limits. Their efforts to imitate the plague of lice were unsuccessful, and they were constrained to cry out, "This is the finger of God." They now disappear from the scene, and desist from their vain and impious rivalry of the Creator, because, in the language of Jethro which Moses reports to us, "In the thing wherein they dealt proudly He was above them."

We see, then, in this account, nothing that is not sufficiently accounted for upon the supposition that these feats of the magicians were mere juggling performances, as there is nothing in their character that does not lie quite within the compass of that wonderful art, especially when we remember the optical character of Scripture language, according to which that is said to be which seems to be, and to be done which seems to be done. Juggling achievements, more stupendous and difficult than these, are familiar things: and the

narrow bounds within which even this simulated power of miracle was confined, stamped it as a weak and miserable imposture, and sent them away from the royal presence in discomfiture and shame.

But, at the same time, it is not well to forget the second of the two postulates with which we started, that all that is supernatural is not divine; and, therefore, that there may be, have been, and not improbably are, spiritual forces at work in this world, visibly and physically, that are not of God. That such was the case, at the period of our Saviour's life on earth, the Gospels abundantly testify. Men were possessed with devils, who wrought on body and mind palpable effects, disordering the intellect, and inflicting diseases on the corporeal system, and creating a strange sort of double consciousness in which the human and the demoniacal are horribly blended together, as when raving madmen, by the presence of an intelligence in them other than their own, recognize Jesus as "the Holy One of God," and beseech Him not to torment them before the time, not to send them away into the awful pit. And, at the same time, there is reason to believe that Satan and the companions of his fall have often availed themselves of heathen rites and superstitions to work their evil will by a horrible mimicry of things divine. Hiding themselves under the dead idols and the shrines of imaginary divinities, they have been able to infuse into them some real supernatural action, which might serve to give them credit with their worshippers, and hold men's minds in bondage to error, and to those abominable practices of lewdness and cruelty which constitute its train. The damsel in the Acts, who brought her masters no small gain by soothsaying, was, according to the original, possessed by a spirit of Python or

Apollo, under whose name the evil spirit that possessed her veiled himself. The old heathen oracles may have been diabolical utterances in this way, clothing themselves in the forms of the popular faith. These forms the devil has ever been ready to sustain in his own interest, as an auxiliary in his fierce conflict with the kingdom of God. The words of Moses himself, "They sacrificed to devils, not to God," and the declaration of St. Paul, that "the things that the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, not to God," certainly look that way. "Signs and wonders to deceive the very elect" are foretold by our Saviour.

And may there not be from this source a supernatural element in the false miracles of a Church corrupt to the verge of apostasy, in fulfillment of St. Paul's prediction, that some shall "give heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils"? And if there be anything beyond sheer imposture in the spiritualism of this day—as who shall presume to be certain that there is not?—it is probably referable to the same origin, and may be pretty safely regarded as the work of Satan, bewildering men's minds with false revelations purporting, as in the old time, to come from the spirits of the dead, drawing away their minds from the simple, saving truths of Christ's Gospel to believe a lie, and laying them open to be betrayed into false beliefs by him who "was a liar from the beginning," in order that they might be "led captive by him at his will." That men of decent lives are implicated in such work, are conscious of no diabolical influence, and do, under what may be its power, utter some virtuous and useful maxims, proves nothing against this supposition. For Satan is too wise a being to show himself naked to men. We read of "the wiles of the devil," and are

told that he is "transformed into an angel of light." This better class of men are first his unconscious dupes, and then his instruments in duping others. That what is not deliberate imposture in this miserable imposition of spiritualism is the work of Satan, is, then, at least, probable; and this probability is enough to urge all who, at their baptism, renounced the devil and all his works, to be careful that a prurient curiosity does not draw them into the charmed circle of his wiles, and beguile them to make shipwreck of the faith, and give over their souls to his hideous domination.

How much reason, then, have we to pray that God would "give us a right judgment in all things," and enlighten the eyes of our understanding, that we may have a quick discernment of the true and false, and not be led away by any of the specious forms and workings of error in its pretensions to spiritual light and power. We have a test by which we may detect and expose such false pretensions if we will faithfully apply it. We have the sure Word of Revelation, in which God has declared His mind to us with such clearness that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein," as that Word has been held and set forth in the Church of God from the earliest times. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them." Variance from this is the sure mark of falsity, supported by whatever display of what may wear the semblance of divine authority. And we have the ministry given to the Church by the Redeemer, as the channels of spiritual power for all purposes pertaining to the salvation of men, with their credentials clear, and their commission unrepealed, and the promise of Christ to be with them unto the end of the world, having in orderly suc-

cession come down to us, and standing in strong and unimpaired authority. To these let us steadfastly cleave, and not let "the craft and subtilty of the devil or man," by any confidence of assertion or show of power, draw us away to follow lying vanities. "The foundation of God standeth sure." "And other foundation can no man lay."

Finally, let us remember that, in this world which we inhabit, Satan, for some wise purpose of God, is permitted to "walk about seeking whom he may devour," that he is "the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience," "the prince of the power of the air," invisible to our physical sight, yet present, active, artful, unwearied. One of his most effectual arts is the imitation of good things, the plausible setting forth of falsehoods and of seemingly harmless ideas, that secretly sap the principles of the spiritual life and the sound basis of Christian morals. His ministers are "transformed as the ministers of righteousness." And his "name is Legion," in the hosts of kindred spirits that obey his will, and in the largeness of his following among men. Well does the Church teach us to pray for deliverance from "the crafts and assaults of the devil." Let us offer that prayer always with a due sense of the reality and awfulness of the peril to which it refers; and carefully guard all the avenues of approach to our minds and hearts, that when his cunning suggestions of doubt or of wickedness assail us, we may be prepared with our ready "Get thee behind me, Satan," and bid the tempter flee.

XIII.

THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART.

But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. — EXODUS x. 27.

THESE words occur at the end of the account of the eighth plague, and what they affirm is there said for the first time. Several times before, it is said, in the narrative, either that the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, or that Pharaoh hardened his heart; but now, first, it is said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Hence, it seems fair to infer that God hardens men's hearts, or withdraws those influences by which the process of hardening the heart is counteracted and opposed, only when they obstinately resist those influences, and persist in hardening their own hearts. God, in the language of Scripture, is said to do that which He permits another to do, who in so doing accomplishes, whether designedly or not, some end of His just and holy government. A remarkable instance of this way of speaking may be seen in the case of David's numbering the people. The author of the Second Book of Samuel says, "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." While the writer of the First Book of Chronicles says, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." The contradiction is only verbal and superficial. The

direct mover was Satan, who was actuated by his hatred of God's people, and his desire to do them harm. And God did not restrain him in his evil purpose, but suffered him to succeed in it, in order that David and his people might receive a salutary chastisement for the pride and worldliness of which their act was the flowing out and open expression, and, in the end, be benefited by a timely correction. The moving, on Satan's part, was active; on God's, simply passive and permissive.

So, when Pharaoh hardens his heart, God is said to harden it, because He allows him to harden it, in order, thereby, more effectively and splendidly to accomplish the beneficent designs of His holy government towards His people. And thus the difficulty in regard to Pharaoh at once vanishes, and his case loses all peculiarity. It immediately falls into the common order and routine of God's providence. Nothing befalls him but that which is common unto men. His heart is hardened just as the hearts of men around us now are hardened; just as, alas! a hardening process may be going on in our own hearts. There is a similar conjunction of the divine and devilish when it is said, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil," while yet it is unimpeachably true that "God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man." And the fact of such temptation, and of such permission, and even of providential arrangements apparently looking to it, is patent and palpable in our ordinary experience and observation. Natural religion has the paradox as much as revealed. If we seek an exact philosophical solution and adjustment of it, we shall find ourselves entangled in the old metaphysical debate about the divine will

and creature will, foreknowledge and free agency; and so plunge into a bog in which never human foot found bottom, and, floundering in it, only bemire ourselves, and sink deeper. Milton makes the fallen angels talk very serenely about such matters; but they are too high for us. The discussion of them does not beget serenity in men.

The Pharaoh who sat upon the throne of Egypt at this time is believed to have been Rameses II.; and if that king, as many suppose, is to be identified with the Sesostris of secular history, he was one of the greatest in the long line of Pharaohs. Pharaoh signifies "the child of the sun," and was the common designation of the Egyptian monarchs till the invasion and conquest of Nebuchadnezzar. Then, for a long period, Egypt was hidden under the overshadowing influence of Babylon and Persia; till, at last, it emerged under the Macedonian rule into a powerful monarchy again in the line of the Ptolemies. The city which the Israelites built, that bore the name of Raamses, or Rameses, certainly favors the supposition, as it is natural to suppose that this king did what the great of this world are wont to do, when they "call the lands after their own names." But Egyptian history at this early period is too fragmentary and obscure to warrant any great confidence in this conclusion. But whether the Pharaoh of the Exodus be Rameses, or Thothmes, as others think, or some other of the Egyptian sovereigns, we know that a Pharaoh was a mighty monarch. The arrogant sense of power speaks in the words of that earlier Pharaoh who patronized and promoted Joseph: "I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." And with the name went down the power. Whoever was Pha-

raoh, he was the child of the sun, the emanation of that divinity; and in resisting him men rebelled against Heaven. For ages the name was handed on, as Cæsar, among the Romans, passed down from the "great Julius," and lingers still in a very dwindled state in the head of the Austrian government that, as professing to be the representative of Charlemagne, down to a late day still farcically called itself the Holy Roman Empire.

Before such a potentate Moses stood as God's representative to deliver God's message. Get this scene before the mind's eye for a moment. In the presence of this great monarch stands a man belonging to a race of slaves, a runaway from justice in other days, a pet and adopted member of the royal family who has ungratefully renounced that high honor, and, following the bent of his plebeian blood, gone off of preference into the wild life of the desert. This man now has dared to come back and beard the monarch to his face, and, in the name of a Divinity whom Egypt neither regarded nor knew, demands, not insolently, but yet resolutely and firmly, the release of his whole people. Yet there is no hand stretched out to arrest or injure him. The king hears him calmly. Was it scorn? No, but a mysterious awe, such as Herod felt when he feared John, and Felix when he trembled before Paul. He quietly but decidedly refuses; and, in so doing, his heart is hardened, — he hardens his own heart, Satan hardens his heart, God hardens it. There are just such things going on now. It is awful, but it is true. Let us consider.

Note, then, that the hardening on the part of God was not arbitrary. Pharaoh was not foredoomed. He was a free agent, and his free agency was carefully respected. At no point were his right and his power of

choice infringed. Motives and influences from opposite quarters were brought to bear upon him, and the question of yielding to the one or the other was left to the determination of his own will. There was never any force employed to prevent his consenting to the departure of the Israelites, or any power exerted to render his heart insensible to the appeals in their behalf. The soul of the man was left open for all the influences that were at work upon it to have free access to it and unfettered operation upon it. Would he obey God? or would he follow the dictates of his own pride and the instigation of the devil? Never was man freer than Pharaoh to listen to God's call. No bondage whatever upon him, but that bondage which sin creates, according to that law which runs, "He that committeth sin is the servant of sin;" nor were there, at least at first, any stint of those gracious influences by which this servitude is counteracted and overcome. His hardness was not decreed nor created by God. He made it himself, just as every soul makes it that refuses to hear God's voice, and "goeth on still in his wickedness." He is no victim of an arbitrary decree that first ordains him to be obstinate, then works the obstinacy in him, and then punishes him for persisting in it,—a decree which Calvin himself, while he coolly propounds it, calls a horrible decree. God only did not bring such overpowering influences to bear upon his will as would have virtually annulled his freedom, and forced him into an obedience, which, for the very reason that it was forced, would have been no true obedience, and been robbed of all moral value and commendableness. Under this state of things he grew hard, just as every man grows hard, who sees duty and will not do it, who feels motions to good and will not

follow their guidance. And even in simply permitting this process to go on, as He must, if He will deal with Pharaoh as a voluntary being, up, at least, to a certain stage in the sad story, God may be said, in a sense, to have been hardening Pharaoh's heart, though that is not affirmed in Scripture. Alas! I fear he is hardening many hearts among us in such a way even now. Not till after the sixth plague is God said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart. Seven several times had God distinctly announced His will to him, accompanying the demand with supernatural demonstrations of His power, and with solemn expostulations and threatenings. Pharaoh's heart had been growing hard through all this lengthened process, more obstinate, more unfeeling, more unimpressible. Yet, up to this point, it is not said that God hardened his heart. All along it had been, "Pharaoh hardened his heart," or, "the heart of Pharaoh was hardened." Now, first, it is, "God hardened Pharaoh's heart." The change of phrase seems to indicate a change of dealing, a second stage in this dreadful process. Doubtless, it does. It is, indeed, said, in connection with the preliminary miracle of turning the rod into a serpent, as it stands in our English version, that "he hardened Pharaoh's heart," leaving the agent in this hardening somewhat doubtful. But there is little reason to doubt that this is a mistranslation. The true rendering is, The heart of Pharaoh was hard, did not yield.

Now, after the sixth plague, it is that God says, "And, in very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up," brought thee to this high estate, and sustained thee in it, "for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout the earth." There is a change of regimen at this point, and it is

judicial and penal. But what is this change of regimen? Simply leaving Pharaoh to himself, ceasing to resist his determination, leaving him to "go on still in his wickedness," withdrawing those checks which, hitherto, had operated to retard his downward progress. It was simply a fulfillment of the threat, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man;" simply saying of him what the prophet represents God as saying of Ephraim, "He is joined to idols, let him alone." All along through this hardening process up to this time, in addition to outward means, the miracles and the words of God, there had been inward influences secretly operating on the soul of Pharaoh, appealing to his conscience and his will, and seeking to draw him back from a course of self-destruction. Now they cease to operate. He is left to nature; and the condition of that man who is left to nature is hopeless. This is reprobation. The human will is not free to good without divine help; and when divine help is withdrawn, its bondage to evil is complete. This is the clear teaching of the Gospel; but even the heathen have dimly seen it. These influences had been given, and had been ineffectual. They did not overbear Pharaoh's will, and force him to compliance; for God made us all free agents, and He will treat us as free agents. He will help us, but He will never compel us. But there is a stage of help beyond which men may pass, and then it ceases. Pharaoh had passed beyond it, and it had ceased with him. Then the man goes on his evil course without counteraction, "as the horse rusheth to the battle;" and the bent of the will to evil unchecked rushes, with ever accelerating force as the currents that are running to the cataract, to its final plunge into the abyss of perdition.

Yet God will make Pharaoh useful. He shall be to his praise somehow. He has made nothing in vain. He will have a revenue of praise out of every creature that He has made. "The Lord hath made all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." If He is not honored in their salvation, He will be honored in their destruction. If they will not be to the praise of His mercy, they shall be to the praise of His justice. Oh! surely, God may be said most emphatically to harden that man whom He gives up to that hardness which he has himself produced, to go on increasing in it, and rush headlong to his awful doom. "For this cause," since "thou hatest to be reformed, and hast cast My words behind thee," have I set thee up, and kept thee in thine eminence, "to show in thee My power, and that My Name might be declared in all the earth." Oh! what a solemn fulfillment of the words was that which spoke in the song that went up a little while after from the shore of the sea, "Sing to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea," and "when Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea." And how does the solemn refrain prolong itself through the ages, as we read it in God's Word, as it is read in our churches on the Sabbath-day, to warn us that "whom God will He hardeneth," when they will not be softened by his Word and Spirit. "He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; none hath hardened himself against Him and prospered."

Enough has been said, I suppose, to show that Pharaoh's case is not exceptional, that it conforms itself to the ordinary laws of our spiritual constitution and of God's moral government; that he is no solitary monster in the pages of history, nor God's dealings with him strange and unexampled, or capricious and tyrannical. It is just a piece of human life, remarkable for nothing but the exalted sphere in which it was exhibited, and the important results that attended upon it. What Pharaoh was doing, multitudes are doing; what God was doing then, He is doing continually. To these results no conspicuous station is needful, nor grossly wicked lives. And, therefore, we may not flatter our souls that we are safe from them because we are obscure, and are not vile criminals. Just such awful mischiefs are being wrought in very quiet lives, and with just such terrible consequences. God lays His commands upon us, and we know them to be His commands, and we will not do them. God forbids our doing certain things, and we do them, while we know that we ought not to do them. We leave undone the things that we ought to do, and we do the things that we ought not to do.

It may be that we acquiesce in the doctrine of our moral helplessness, and find it a convenient refuge. We say that God's grace has not yet come to us, and so we can do nothing but live a life of sin. We say, The minister tells us that, and the Bible, and we believe it; and so it is not our fault. If God wants us for His service, He will come and bring us into it; and until then, there is nothing for us to do but to go on as we are. This is false and abominable doctrine, grounded upon the notion of an arbitrary predestination and an irresistible grace, and the necessity of a

sudden, violent, and conscious conversion. There have been inward remonstrances, twinges of conscience, inclinations in the soul from time to time for a different course. And this is God's voice in you, the presence of His Spirit in your soul, calling you, enabling you to turn from your evil way and live. Grace has come to you. You are not waiting for it; it is here. Do you think that your baptism was nothing, and that it has brought you no help from on high? Or, if you are not baptized, do you think that it is for nothing that you are included in the scope of redeeming mercy? No: it will not do. You have "grieved the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you were sealed unto the day of redemption." You have "quenched the Spirit." You have "done despite to the Spirit of grace." We may say to you, as St. Stephen said to the persecuting Jews, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." You might renounce sin, and resolve to serve God at any time if you would, and that, not in your own strength, but in God's, which has been freely imparted to you. And now, have these inward remonstrances grown feebler? Do you sin with more ease, with less reluctance, with less discomfort? Do you lead a worldly life with less sense of its wickedness, with less fear of its results? Then you are being hardened, you are hardening yourselves, "the god of this world" is hardening you, you are letting him harden you. And have these remonstrances ceased altogether? I trust there is no such case before me; but there may be too close approximations to it. Do you live on without compunction, and without fear? Ah, then, God is hardening you. He has given you up. Beware! "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

XIV.

THE PASSOVER.

It is the Lord's Passover. — EXODUS xii. 11.

ONE only of the ten plagues has left a permanent mark upon the world, and the mark which it has left is very strong and clear, and remains to this day. That mark is even now on us, and on all Christian people. For this plague it was that gave rise to an ordinance, which, in its altered form of the Lord's Supper, is still known and observed wherever the name of Christ is named. The plague referred to is the death of the first-born; and the ordinance growing out of it is the ordinance of the Passover.

The plagues were, throughout, attended with a series of exemptions for Israel; and these exemptions were manifestly as supernatural and miraculous as the inflictions, proving, incontestibly, that the God who sent the stroke, also regulated and circumscribed its operation. But the exemption from the last and greatest calamity, the death of the first-born, was granted, not directly, like the rest, but by an intermediate process, in which an agency was assigned to the Israelites themselves. This was effected by an ordinance, which, at the time, would answer the purpose of a test of their faith; and then, and ever after, be a symbol of a far greater deliverance in later times. It was to be a symbol, so long as it should continue, looking both backward and

forward, ever commemorating a past deliverance, and prefiguring that far greater salvation to come, of which the former was a type or prophetic emblem. This ordinance was the Passover.

The directions for its observance were minute; and the elaborate and particular preparation which was to precede it, and the exact and careful manner of its celebration, pointed to its importance among religious institutions, and the remarkable and momentous character of its import and use. There was little room left in it for the exercise of human discretion; its whole ceremonial was marked out and laid down with care and explicitness. Its appointment marked a new epoch in Church life and development, as the beginning of that "law of commandments contained in ordinances," which "was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come," and which succeeded that simpler form of Church life which pertained to the Abrahamic covenant. Amidst the complicated and extensive ceremonial of the Mosaic system, this ordinance, which was, as it were, the germ out of which it was unfolded, stood as its distinctive rite, not, indeed, as superseding the old badge of membership given to Abraham, which had just been so strongly indicated in its authority over Moses himself at the inn, but as added to it to make a new stage in the Church's progress. The two ordinances, Circumcision and the Passover, co-existing in the law together, "were figures for the time then present," of the two sacraments which "Christ hath ordained in his Church" "as generally necessary to salvation, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord;" and, in a lower measure, they were channels of the same benefits.

The whole ceremonial of the Passover was figura-

tive, so contrived as to be in all its parts a lively image of the redemption of the world "by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ," and of its efficacy in saving men from the just punishment of their sins. Thus it was to work out a present deliverance for the Jewish people, and to foreshow a far greater deliverance for Jew and Gentile alike, in the fullness of time, and be the antecedent and image of that great Sacrament in which this "inestimable benefit" was to be commemorated and appropriated by faithful hearts to the end of the world.

In all the disasters that had fallen upon Egypt and her king, Israel had remained unscathed, without any protection or precaution of their own devising. No agency of their own had been called forth. They had simply been passive. When "the land was corrupted by reason of the swarms of flies," there were no swarms of flies in the land of Goshen. When "all the cattle of Egypt died," "of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one." When the hail "smote throughout all the land of Egypt," "in the land of Goshen where the children of Israel were, was there no hail." And when there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days, "all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." The sun, as it was wont, looked upon them benignly from that cloudless sky, and no murky shroud extinguished his light to them.

But now that the greatest horror of all was at hand in the slaughter of the first-born, there was still to be for them immunity from its injuries; but it was to come to them not as heretofore, nakedly, but by compliance with appointed means. It was to work out that great deliverance for them which all former portents had

failed to accomplish; but the deliverance was to come in a form which was to furnish a practical test of their faith and their obedience to the divine will. It was to break the rod of the oppressor, and let the oppressed go free; but it was so to do it, as, at the same time, to plant the germ of a new life in them, which, in its growth and spread in their souls, would set them free from a worse yoke than the kings' — the yoke of their own sin, — to serve God in a true fear and love of His Name. The religious life, we may well believe, was well-nigh dead among the Hebrews at this time. Slavery had nearly killed their nobler aspirations, and among these their spiritual impulses. Drudges, whose life was consumed in wearing toil, their thoughts rose not much above the work that wore out their days. God was but a dead idea in their minds, that did little to actuate their conduct or elevate their aims. And if they had not fallen into the idolatries of the land, as from the subsequent history it might seem that, to some extent, they had, they were kept from it more by hostility to the Egyptians than by religious convictions. Yet these degenerate people were the Church of God, and possessed what little of the knowledge of God and of truth there was in the world. And now that they were to be called forth to occupy a more conspicuous position, and do a more conspicuous work, as God's people in the eyes of the world, how necessary it was that the feeble spark in their souls should be fed and quickened; and, to this end, that, besides beholding prodigies, on which, perhaps, they only gazed with stupid wonder, they should be called upon to do something by means of which their faith might evince its reality and practical power, and, in action, gain increase of strength and vigor. They should have de-

liverance, but it should be by a method, which, while it should display their absolute dependence upon God as completely as any inaction could, would call their faith into exercise, and manifest and strengthen it in acts of obedience. For what they should be required to do should be destitute of all natural power to further their deliverance; and yet, should be the indispensable condition on which their deliverance should depend. Such a provision was the Passover.

Let us follow it a little into particulars. On the tenth day of the month Abib or Nisan, which, as the Jewish months were lunar, fell, with some variations, as our Easter, which obeys its lead, now does, somewhere in early spring, every Israelitish family was to select a yearling lamb, or kid, which was to be a male without blemish, and keep it four days with peculiar care, in order that it might be in the best possible condition, and free from all impurity by unclean food, or anything that could work defilement in it. The day was selected in order that the fourth day after might be the day of the full moon that was to light the way of God's people in their nocturnal flight. And on the fourteenth day, at evening, the lamb was to be killed, and its blood sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop on the lintel and on the side posts of the entrance door of the house. The body was to be roasted whole, and not a bone of it was to be broken, the only accompaniments of the repast being unleavened bread and bitter herbs. It was to be wholly eaten that night; no part of it was to be carried out of the house; and the smallest fragments that remained till morning were to be carefully consumed by fire. They were to eat it in the garb and attitude of travellers, with their sandals on their feet, their loins girded, and their staff in their hand,

ready to depart. And the promise was, that when the destroying angel came to smite the first-born of Egypt, he should pass over every house whose door should display the blood-stain, and leave it and its inmates untouched. The lamb slain was a sacrifice to divine justice; the sprinkling of the blood was the application of its saving power to men; the feasting on its flesh was the enjoyment of the blessings it procured; and the unleavened bread and bitter herbs were the purification, and self-denial, and contrition for sin, which must always mingle with it, and qualify it.

The behest was obeyed. The people evidently were in a softened and compliant mood. The portents that had been exhibited before them had awakened the expectation of some final and effectual interposition in their behalf. They had learned to put faith in Moses as the voice of God. And, doubtless, he had told them to be in readiness for a hasty departure when the fourteenth night of Abib should arrive. The directions are faithfully obeyed. Every Jewish family is gathered beneath its roof, and the sprinkled blood is seen on every Jewish door. The lamb is roasted and eaten; and the unleavened dough that has not been consumed is set aside. The divine judgment with startling suddenness executes its dread behest. In an instant the breath of innumerable sleepers throughout the land is still. "There is not a house in Egypt in which there is not one dead." The wail of woe rises on the night air through all the length of the land from the mountains to the sea, loud, frantic, bitter. The proclamation of Pharaoh lingers not till morning: "Rise up," "go serve the Lord as ye have said." The people heap upon them silver, and gold, and raiment, not lent, as our translation unfortunately has it, but given, — the wages

of their uncompensated labor, the bribe of a speedy riddance. It is the dead hour of night. The stars are out. The bright moon is in the sky at its full. The quiet heavens look down undisturbed on the troubled and tumultuous scene, as the heavens always look on the "fitful fever" of man's life. Soon the long procession is on its way, led on by Moses with his staff. the women with their little children, and their unbaked dough bound up in their kneading-troughs upon their shoulders, the aged and infirm on litters and beasts of burden, strong men with vigorous and determined step, — a huge host, moving over the green meadows towards the wilds, — a company of slaves set free, turning their backs forever on the treacherous country whither their fathers had come as honored guests, to find a home for themselves and their posterity in a land which God had given them for a possession. Moses has conquered. "Egypt is glad at their departing." "It is a night to be much remembered."

And that it might be remembered, God made the Passover, thus begun, a perpetual ordinance, to be observed annually of the children of Israel in their generations, and, Christianized as we have it, to continue to the end of the world. But while it thus pointed back to the departure out of Egypt, it also pointed forward to a greater redemption, of which that was the type, as the ordinance itself typified the means of accomplishing it; and thus it was a prophecy, as well as a memorial. And of this quality of it the New Testament is full. "Christ our Passover," says St. Paul, "is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." He is "the Lamb of God

that taketh away the sin of the world," "a Lamb without blemish and without spot," "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," "a Lamb that was slain." As Moses, "through faith kept the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the first-born should touch them;" so, by "the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," are we ransomed from the power of the destroyer. On the cross He bore the scorching heat of the divine anger; and "having made perfect our redemption by His death," He gives us His flesh to eat, and says, "He that eateth Me shall live by Me." As the lamb was wholly eaten, that no part might be left for decay, so "His flesh saw no corruption;" and as they were not to break a bone of the Lamb, so, when the soldiers broke the legs of the malefactors to hasten the extinction of life, "they brake not His legs." By "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," we are set free from the bondage of Satan and guilt, and go forth with cheerful and hopeful steps to seek the "better country" which God's love has provided for us. We keep the feast of grateful joy always in our hearts, from time to time more formally in the appointed ordinance, yet always purged from the old leaven, in purity, in humiliation, and sorrow for sin. And so "redeemed unto God by His death," sprinkled with His blood, and washed in it from our sins, fed and strengthened with His flesh and the grace it imparts to us, as pilgrims and strangers, in sincerity, repentance, and godly self-discipline, we "pass through things temporal," going from strength to strength, in hope and earnest endeavor to secure for ourselves, as the end of our faith, a better country, even an heavenly. The coincidences are too close and too numerous to be accidental. They are not accidental. God formed

the type to prefigure the antitype, and fashioned the antitype into a conformity to the type, that, in both, His hand might be seen and adored, and "that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in righteousness and holiness before Him all the days of our life." And well, then, does our Church teach us to say, "He is the very Paschal Lamb which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world; who, by His death, hath destroyed death, and, by His rising to life again, hath restored to us everlasting life."

But as the type vanishes, because that which is perfect has come, a new emblem arises from the departing shadow to take its place, and keep in memory, through all time, that finished salvation of which the old had been the figure. It was at this very Paschal Feast, "the same night in which He was betrayed," when the supper was ended, that "the Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is My Body, do this in remembrance of Me; and He also took the cup, and said, This is My Blood; drink ye all of this." And then began the new Passover in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood which are "spiritually taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper," the memorial of a richer redemption than the old Passover celebrated; may I not say, also, the prefiguration of a higher beatitude to come in that day when we "shall eat bread in the kingdom of God," and Christ "will drink the fruit of the vine new with us in His Father's kingdom?" Still, therefore, does the rite in its new form preserve its double character of a memorial and a prophecy, while it mystically conveys to us the blessing it commemorates, and gives us foretastes and earnests of the blessing it

foreshows. And so shall it go on, cheering us with memories of the past and hopes of the future, till all shadows pass away, and we join the happy throng of those, who, having made their robes white in His Blood, see the "Lamb that was slain" with open face, and "follow Him whithersoever He goeth."

A word or two more and I am done.

The Passover was a protection to those who duly observed it, and to no others. If the blood was sprinkled on the lintel, the angel saw it and passed it over. To that house there was perfect security; and, as within it they feasted on the Lamb, equipped for their departure, they knew that their bondage was ended, and the hour of their deliverance was at hand. But if any unbelieving Israelite had failed to sprinkle the blood, and display the appointed sign, his being an Israelite would not have defended him. He had made himself virtually an Egyptian, and he must share Egypt's fate. And so it is with us. We are here in a Christian land, in the Christian Church. But are we Christians, in any spiritual sense, in aught but the name? Have we sprinkled the Blood of Christ upon us by the exercise of a living faith in Him? and do we live upon the provisions of His grace, as pilgrims yearning after liberty, and looking for a land of rest? No other religion but this will God respect in the day when He executes judgment, and without it the name of Christian will not save us from being "condemned with the world."

And, finally, the faith that delivered Israel, that broke the yoke of his bondage, and sent him forth on his way to the promised land, expressed itself in a visible testimony, by physical symbolic acts. Such are also prescribed to us. The faith that does not move

in appointed channels, lacks evidence of reality and genuineness. True faith obeys, and presumes not to question the divine authority, or the divine wisdom. Hear, then, the Saviour's voice, and obey it:—"This do in remembrance of Me."

XV.

THE RED SEA.

And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. — EXODUS xiv. 22.

THE journey from Egypt to Canaan, by the customary route across the Isthmus of Suez, is not very long; and if the Israelites had followed it, in not many days they would have found themselves on the border of the land of promise, standing face to face with the fierce and warlike tribes of men with whom they were to contest its possession. These people were the descendants of Ham, like the Egyptians, of the same stock with the Phœnicians, whose splendid cities, Tyre and Sidon, and afterwards Carthage, were among the earliest homes of commerce and civilization. They were "men of stature," and uncommon physical vigor; and they were versed in the arts of war and of defense, and were not at all likely to surrender their country at the call of a band of fugitive slaves, or respect the name of the unknown God in whom he trusted, and by whose commission he professed to act.

To attempt to penetrate Canaan in the face of such adversaries, would have been to plunge into a deadly war, with slender hopes of victory on human grounds. They did not take this route, but chose another. They left on one side the huge breakwater that serves

as a barrier between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, and as a causeway to unite the continents of Africa and Asia, and diverged from it towards the shore of the Red Sea. And they did not do this ignorantly or capriciously, but by divine direction. They followed not their own will; but the pillar of cloud and fire went before them to show them the way. And in this God displayed to them His kindness and His wisdom. They were totally unfit for the encounter which would have awaited them if they had gone directly to Canaan. They were freedmen who had just escaped from bondage; and in mind and body they exhibited the debasing effects of slavery. They were pusillanimous, mean-spirited, without the energy and fortitude which are requisite to the performance of great achievements. "And it came to pass," says the historian, "when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure when they see war the people repent, and return to Egypt: but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea."

Goshen was but about thirty miles from the sea, and they soon found themselves standing on its bank, their progress arrested by its deep and impassable waters. To add to their difficulty, they had reached the shore, so we judge, through a ravine shut in by high, rocky cliffs on either hand, so that there was no alternative for them but to go forward into the sea, or backward by the way that they had come. And this last resource, of retreat, was soon cut off. Pharaoh's consent to their departure, wrung from him by the terrors of the night of anguish, as the panic subsided

seemed to him an unworthy weakness, a folly that disgraced a puissant king, and one that he ought as promptly as possible to repair. "The heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them;" and "he pursued after them," "and overtook them encamping by the sea beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon."

The Red Sea, at its northern end, forks, and is divided into two separate bays, known in modern times as the gulfs of Suez, and of Akaba. The space between them is a triangular peninsula of wild, rugged land, in the centre of which is Mount Sinai. The country is made up of mountains and huge rocks, between which lie, here and there, imbedded valleys of great fertility and beauty. This was the country on which the eyes of the Israelites rested as they looked wistfully and anxiously across the watery waste before them, to the opposite shore of the Gulf of Suez.

And now, "the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them, and they were sore afraid; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord." And, surely, that was well; for there was none other that could help them in this extremity. But now, also, the perversity and weakness of their hearts broke out in clamors and reproaches against their human benefactor: "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in

the wilderness." But Moses stills their querulous and cowardly charges with words of religious faith and bravery: "Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

And now, "the Angel of God which went before the camp of Israel removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: and it came between the camp of the Egyptians, and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these, so that the one came not near the other all the night." To the Egyptians it appeared opaque and dusky. As an impenetrable screen, it hid the fugitives from the sight of their pursuers, and enabled them to pass the night in their encampment by the sea without attack or molestation.

Under this effectual cover in their rear they rested; while, in that self-same night, where, at its coming in, nothing but the relentless waves were before them, the hand of God was opening for them, through the waters, "a wonderful way" of safety and escape. At nightfall, "Moses stretched out his hand over the sea," bearing in it the rod which, from a shepherd's staff, had become an instrument of God's power. "And the Lord caused the sea to go back, by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." And thus, when the day dawned on the morrow, a practicable path lay open before them. "And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and

on their left." Thus, although natural means were active here, the result was not the less miraculous. Evidently, the narrative does not describe a general abatement of the waters produced by the force of the wind, laying bare places which are ordinarily covered; for the sea was too deep and broad for any such result. Nor does such a phenomenon answer to the historian's description. Plainly, a passage through the sea was scooped out by the Divine Hand, the east wind exercising some subordinate instrumentality in the result; while the waters above and below were held up at their ordinary level, to fence in the way, and, with their liquid substance, guard it on either side as with a wall of adamant. Such is the evident force of the historian's words. And the magnificent poetry of the ode that celebrates the great deliverance accords with them: "With the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea." The sea was cut in twain by a road cleft through its yielding substance by the Almighty hand for the passage of His people. Such, too, is Isaiah's language, — "hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over." Vainly does rationalism essay to weaken and diminish the wonders of God, of that God "who ruleth the sea," and who, in the grand words of the same prophet, "led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious Arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name." So, through the great deep He "led His people like sheep by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

It was the nation's natal day. It never faded from the nation's memory. "Their whole national existence was a thanksgiving, a votive tablet, for their

deliverance in and from the Red Sea." It was the commemoration, not of what man had wrought for God, but of what God had wrought for man. No baser thoughts, no disturbing influences could mar the overwhelming sense with which, as if after a hard-won battle, the nation found voice in the first Hebrew melody, the first burst of national poetry, when "Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron," "who had watched by the river side the infant brother who had now become the nation's father," "took a timbrel in her hand," and the voices of the multitude went up in that noble song, to which her refrain continually responded, "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea."

Meanwhile, Pharaoh and his host, hurried on by that rash blindness which foreshows destruction, went into the sea after Israel. "And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels that they drave them heavily." Retreat was now impossible. "The sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared." "They sank as lead in the mighty waters." "And Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore." It was a terrible blow to Egypt, the loss of its king and army thus coming on top of the devastation of its fields, and the destruction of the first-born in all its families. In the expressive figure of a German writer, "It drove a nail in Egypt's coffin." But the great event clung always to Israel's consciousness. No nation had ever so glorious a beginning. It furnished imagery to their poets and their prophets. It is celebrated by their

psalmists. And to encourage them to hope for deliverance from difficulties and dangers in after ages, the prophet, drawing his imagery from this great event, says, "The Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea." And all along through the ages the Church's song has been, and is now in our Christian assemblies, "To Him, who smote Egypt with their first-born: for His mercy endureth forever: and brought out Israel from among them: for His mercy endureth forever: with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm: for His mercy endureth forever. Who divided the Red Sea in two parts: for His mercy endureth forever: and made Israel to go through the midst of it: for His mercy endureth forever: but as for Pharaoh and his host, He overthrew them in the Red Sea: for His mercy endureth forever." Then God "cut Rahab and wounded the dragon." Rahab is Egypt; and the word, which signifies proud, is applied to her on account of her pride. The dragon is the crocodile, the monster of her river, which is her cognizance or emblem. While the song of Miriam comes down through the ages, proclaiming Israel's victory and Israel's exultation: —

> "Where now, she sang, the tall Egyptian spear?
> On's sunlike shield, and Zoan's chariot, where?
> Above their ranks the whelming waters spread.
> Shout, Israel, for the Lord hath triumphèd!
> And every pause between, as Miriam sang,
> From tribe to tribe the martial thunder rang;
> And loud and far their stormy chorus spread,
> Shout, Israel, for the Lord hath triumphèd."

See here God's care of the Church. It was not in behalf of Israel, simply as a people, but as the chosen people, that this stupendous exertion of divine power was put forth, that the Lord thus "made bare His arm in the sight of all the nations." But how

was Israel the chosen people? Surely, not for any secular, temporal end, to be the depositary of science, or art, or liberty, or wealth, but as the custodian of religion, of truth, of the knowledge of God, and duty and salvation. This it was that made a race of slaves, that had grown abject and spiritless under the pressure of their bondage, of more account than great Egypt, with all her culture and intelligence, her structures and achievements, her swarming myriads of wealthy and prosperous men. To this signal evidence of His estimation God refers ages after, where He says, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: I gave Egypt for thy ransom." Moses himself asks, "Hath God assayed to go and take Him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched-out arm, and by great terror, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt?" And if the answer be, No — and neither the question nor the answer has lost any of its pertinency with time — it is because never before nor since has any nation, as such, been called forth to such a mission and to such a work.

But the institution, which then was that nation, exists, and has lost none of its sacredness, value, or necessity. The Church is the paramount interest of the world as the receptacle of man's highest privileges and hopes, and for its sake well may seas dry up, and "mountains fall to dust." And now, if we will receive God's measures as true measures, we, too, shall esteem the Church precious and supreme among our interests, and we shall not grudge to give of our wealth, our labor, our knowledge, our time, our thoughts, and our prayers, for its preservation, increase, prosperity, success, influence, and honor, liberally and gladly.

"For her my tears shall fall;
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end."

Again, the Church is safe, and no injuries inflicted upon it by false friends or open enemies, can ever prevail to ruin or destroy it. It may be brought into great straits, but then it will appear that man's extremity is God's opportunity, and that He suffered it to be brought into these straits for the purpose of making His care and affection for it more evident and illustrious. "What," says St. Paul, "if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of His mercy?" For these ends He brought the Church and her enemies into such close conjunction at the Red Sea, that there, in her marvellous deliverance, and in the ruin of her foes, His love for her might be more distinguishingly exhibited. For, surely, never was the danger of the Church more imminent, than when it was penned up like a flock destined for slaughter, the deep waters of the sea before it, and the army of Egypt in its rear, hemmed in by insurmountable cliffs on either hand, so that there was no way of escape. Its destruction seemed inevitable. Pharaoh had but to pounce upon his prey, and it was secured. But when its ruin seemed nearest, its splendid triumph was at hand. Quailing before Egypt's wrath in the evening, in the morning they were singing pæans over its terrible discomfiture. And this is a parable as well as a history. What God was doing then, He is always doing, only less conspicuously. Never despair of the Church. She may seem in danger, but she never is. God has said, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall pros-

per." And Christ has promised that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her." She is indestructible. We are on the side that must conquer.

And, once more, it is said in Scripture, that the Israelites were "all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;" and, accordingly, our Church, in her Baptismal Service, speaks of God as "safely leading the children of Israel His people through the Red Sea, figuring thereby His Holy Baptism." Plainly, this baptism was no immersion. No water touched their persons, unless as they were sprinkled with the spray and the falling rain, for the Psalmist says, "The clouds poured out water." The Egyptians were the only people that were immersed. But in this passage of the sea the chosen people were solemnly initiated into that system of which Moses was the human head, as by baptism men are initiated "into the fellowship of Christ's disciples." Nothing like some great crisis of this sort, some agony of fear and ecstasy of deliverance, some awful hour of conflict and trial, to fasten a cause upon our souls, and make us its steadfast friends and maintainers. Some such baptism almost every great cause in which great human interests are involved has undergone. Early Christianity was consecrated to its work in that baptism of persecution which made the blood of the martyrs the seed of the Church; the Reformation, in the baptism of flame, when the confessors of a true gospel "glorified God in the fires." My brethren, we are baptized into Christ, and made members of His Body. Let us not grudge to suffer, if need be, for His name's sake; and whatever betides us "through the fraud and malice of the devil," "be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord."

XVI.

THE DESERT.

So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur. — EXODUS XV. 22.

THE shore on which the Israelites stood, when they had come up out of the bed of the sea, was the outer margin of that wide and indefinite region which is commonly known as the desert or wilderness, on its front towards Egypt. The country they had reached is the Arabia Petrea of geography, the stony Arabia, as distinguished from the sandy plains of the interior, and the rich fields of the southern extremity. It is for the most part a confused mass of rocks and mountains, with green valleys and arable lands here and there nestling among them. There the descendants of Ishmael and Esau and of the sons of Abraham by Keturah roamed then, and roam still, leading an unsettled, nomadic life. The land was familiar to Moses; for he had passed forty years in it, feeding the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro the Midianite, unconsciously at school for the scenes and works upon which he was now entering. And there, even then, were his wife and children; Zipporah, with his two sons, having withdrawn thither to the protection of her father, by the direction of Moses it might seem, after the failure of his mission to Pharaoh.

This rocky tract is separated from Egypt by that

large expanse of water, which from ancient times has been known by the name of the Red Sea, a name of uncertain derivation. Perhaps as probable an explanation of it as any, is that which makes it equivalent to the sea of Edom, or Esau, whose territories came down to its northeastern shore. Edom, or Esau, signifies red, and upon this supposition, the color of Esau's hair, which gave him his name, has singularly enough perpetuated itself in this appellation. The cliffs of sandstone, of a reddish color, on the eastern shore of the sea, amidst which the Edomites had their abodes, may have conspired to give propriety to the name.

The country was not all a waste by any means. It inclosed within it rich pastures and productive fields, whence support was derived for the inhabitants and their flocks and herds. Indeed, "sand is the exception and not the rule of the Arabian Desert." There are tracts in it of great fertility, and oases filled with the richest verdure and the most redundant vegetation. We are not to conceive of the desert as a desert in the sense which we ordinarily attach to that word. It was a wide expanse of wild country over which pastoral tribes roved, oftentimes at war, and living by prey, more addicted to pillage and rapine than to the peaceful arts of husbandry and the quiet pursuits of settled and orderly society.

Here dwelt, or rather roamed, as the dominant race at least, the progeny of Ishmael, of whom it was foretold that he should "be a wild man," and that "his hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him," true to the parental type, as they have continued to be down to our day. In this respect they are a striking proof of the tenacity of national qualities, and of the truth and enduring force of the

words of God. For the identical traits of character and forms of life are seen still in the modern Arab, the Bedouin that roves and plunders, and that makes light of the property and the life of men in his marauding journeys and encounters. And yet all this lawlessness is strangely coupled with a certain rude sense and observance of honor, and fidelity, and courtesy, and generosity to all who come beneath the shadow of his tent and trust themselves to his protection — the firmest of friends, the most unscrupulous and unsparing of enemies, his normal condition one of universal and continual hostility, and yet rigidly exact in his observance of every pledge of amity.

A modern skeptic, a fallen star, alas! among the angels of the churches, has endeavored to cast doubt on the credibility of the Scriptural record, by calling in question the capability of the desert to furnish subsistence to the Israelites during their long sojourn within its borders. But, in the first place, it is distinctly stated that in their wanderings in this wild region "men did eat angels' food," and were "fed with the bread of Heaven," the manna, which it is just as easy for God to give as to bring food out of the earth by the ordinary processes of tillage and growth, and intrinsically not a whit more mysterious, not more wonderful save in its uncommonness. And, secondly, the face of the wilderness bears unmistakable traces of a population in former days much larger than it now contains, and a correspondent advantage over its present state in fertility and productiveness. No careful observer can scan this region without seeing that it is not what it once was, that a process of deterioration has brought barrenness upon it as it has in the Holy Land; that with the disappearance of the forests on its high

grounds, its moisture has dried up; and that large tracts, which were once capable of supporting multitudes of men, are now sterile from the failure of irrigation, and not from the natural poverty and refractoriness of the soil. When Edom hewed out in the rocks the wonderful city of palaces and tombs, there were grain fields and vineyards to support and gladden its people. And even now, there are green and fruitful places enough to prove, that by the application of care and industry much of the country might be reclaimed and made to yield ample returns.

Of this weird and rugged region, scarred and furrowed by the conflicts of ages, the culminating point is Mount Sinai, or Horeb, the Mount of God, rising 9,000 feet above the level of the sea, standing in solitary grandeur like a king among the lesser peaks and crags over which it towers, at whose feet Moses heard his commission from out of the Burning Bush, and from whose awful brow he afterwards "received the Law with the disposition of angels."

Moses was familiar with this country, as I have said. He had spent forty years of his life in it. He had formed an intimate alliance with its people by his marriage with Jethro's daughter. The value and design of this Midianitish stage of his education were now to be shown. He had established friendly relations with the people, and forestalled their good will and sympathy. They looked upon him as one of themselves, and were ready to recognize him as himself a son of the desert. He knew their habits and their sentiments. The kind of life that he was entering upon was not novel to him. He was inured to it. Perhaps he had learned to love it; for with all its hardships, it has a charm. He knew the topography of the land to an extent. He had gone

over much of it in the care of Jethro's flocks, and he knew the passes of the mountains, the feasible ways of travel, the fresh springs and green pastures. And so, while his Egyptian knowledge came in play in framing the institutions and fashioning the manners of the incipient nation, his wilderness experience was not less useful in providing for their immediate wants, dealing in their behalf with the native population, and suggesting to them measures of relief and precautions of safety. And they had not advanced far on their journey, when his father-in-law came to him, bringing to him his wife and two sons, with friendly greetings, congratulations, and counsels, and with fresh pledges of amity, which ever after continued inviolate between the allied races.

By Jethro's judicious advice Moses was led to appoint subordinate officers to lighten the burden of his official cares, that he might be "able to endure, and the people go to their place in peace." Hence arose "the seventy elders of Israel," the earliest form of that magistracy which through the whole subsequent history of the nation continued to be a permanent body in it, which we read of in the Gospels, and which in the later ages of its existence constituted a principal part of the Sanhedrim or supreme judicial tribunal, among the Jews.

Nor are we to think of the Israelites as moving on their way through the desert as a confused crowd, without arrangement or system. It is said in the account, that "the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt." The word might mean, according to its ancient sense, equipped with arms. But this is improbable. Whence should arms come for 600,000 Israelites? The margin of our Bibles has instead, "by five in a rank." Whether this be the

sense or not, for it is confessedly obscure, it pretty certainly denotes organization and order, and assures us that they marched according to a rule, in an orderly and prescribed array. And farther on in the history we learn that they were divided into four squadrons as it were, consisting each of three tribes, each squadron having its own standard, and each followed by a detachment of Levites, by that time constituted the sacerdotal tribe. Judah led the van of the whole, as the tribe that was destined to rule, and give out of its royal line the Messiah to the world. And under him were Issachar and Zebulon. Reuben, the first-born, deprived of his primogenital honors, yet keeping a shadow of them in this distinction, headed the second division, attended by Simeon and Gad. Ephraim, the representative of the honored Joseph, and bearing their great ancestor's bones, held the third place, followed by Manasseh and Benjamin. While Dan the warlike tribe that was to leap from Bashan, "the rearward of all the camps," closed the march, attended by Asher and Naphtali.

Each tribe had its symbol, and its chief or captain, acting in subordination to the captain of the leading tribe of the squadron; while the ark was borne in state in the middle of the host, and the pillar of fire and cloud moved before them in the van. And in their encampments the same order was carefully observed. "And it came to pass when the ark set forward," which was the signal to move, "that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel."

Here was the utility and practical application of

Moses' Egyptian civilization, his cultured organizing faculty brought most usefully and sagaciously into play in his wilderness life, to train the people into habits of system and subordination, and enable them to move in their journey with facility, compactness, symmetry, and comparative freedom from exposure. So, not as a rude and promiscuous assemblage, but as a regulated and organic body, a nation and a Church, with due array of laws and officers and visible forms and symbols, Israel, under the leadership of "Moses the man of God," moved on into the wilderness, such as I have described it to be, and dwelt in it, with frequent changes of place, and alternate advances and retreats, during the long period of forty years.

Forty years, I say, they wandered in this wilderness. The regular route to Canaan would not have carried them into the desert at all, or at least they would have only touched a corner of it. This long detention was penal, the punishment of their perversity. The whole generation that came out of Egypt left their bones in the desert: only two of their number, Caleb and Joshua, were permitted to enter Canaan. This was punitive, the penalty of their rebellion and unbelief. Yet there was a deeper reason. The same consideration that sent them out of the direct course, to enter the desert through the Red Sea, continued to operate. That generation were unfit for the conflicts by which alone Canaan was to be won. These men had been slaves, perhaps all born and reared in slavery; and the curse and taint of slavery were upon them. That wretched institution takes the manhood out of men, and unfits them for manly and valorous action. The generation of freedmen must die out and be exhausted; and then their descendants, trained up in the free air

of the wilderness, and habituated to independent thought and action, might successfully encounter the sons of Anak, and besiege the "cities great and walled up to heaven" in which they made their abode. So their "carcasses fell in the wilderness;" and "their children which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, went in;" and God gave them the land for a possession. And He was merciful as well as just; for had they undertaken the conquest, they must have fallen like "sheep appointed to be slain," and the expedition would have proved a failure. So God in wrath remembers mercy, and in His severest dealings conceals under a veil of justice a reserve of love.

This desert sojourn of Israel is a parable of human life, and that both on its secular and on its spiritual side.

By its secular side I mean that series of outward events by which man's passage through the world is visibly marked and diversified. And truly a checkered scene that passage presents to view, in which joys and sorrows, successes and failures, victories and defeats, follow in quick succession, coloring the landscape with lights and shadows like those that flit across the hill-sides, when clouds drift rapidly over the face of the sun. Here is Elim, with "its twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees," where youth encamps in its day of hope and joy, when "in the day of his espousals and in the day of the gladness of his heart," the mother crowns her child with the garland of fresh affection, and earth blooms like a new Eden before his eyes. And if there has been before a Marah whose waters are bitter, it was but that light childish grief, whose bitter waters are easily made sweet. And there, with manna falling on his ways, in

his "daily bread" given him from above for his daily subsistence, he goes forward.

But soon he comes to Rephidim, where there is no water, some place of pain and thirst, where the world reveals its emptiness, and shows its pleasures to be but "waters that fail." The loved child dies; the enterprise does not succeed; the promise of domestic bliss proves hollow; sickness consumes the marrow of his vigor. He grows angry with God, and in his disappointment acts hastily and "speaks unadvisedly with his lips," and plants some thorn in his life that vexes him to its end.

And now, he stands beneath Mount Sinai, and "the violated law speaks out its thunders," telling him of some deed "whereof his conscience is afraid;" or spreading out duty appallingly in its exceeding breadth; and the hopes and fears of a world to come mingle up more consciously than heretofore with the incidents of his onward journey. And then he chooses whom he will serve. Perhaps, anon, he makes him a "golden calf," "and says to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence;" or he follows "the counsel of Balaam," and is led into the filthiness of vice; or he imitates Korah in his insane ambition, and aspires restlessly after place and honor. Avarice, or sensuality, or ambition fill his life's void space. In cowardice at one time he draws back from some attainable good, and will not heed the testimony of the grapes of Eshcol; and then at another, in rashness he presumes to go up into some hill-top for some good that is not attainable, and is smitten and discomfited. Zipporah dies. Miriam dies. And Aaron dies. Wife, brother, sister. The friends of his youth fall around him like autumn leaves. Till at last the old man stands on the bleak brow of Pisgah, to

die himself. He has had many blessings and solaces, but the good he has yearned for is not attained. He sees it. It lies yonder. But Jordan rolls between.

And now to look for a very few moments to the spiritual side of life, the Christian's walk from the city of Destruction to the land of the shining ones, so graphically described by the dreamer in his "Pilgrim's Progress." There too is "the kindness of his youth, the day of his espousals," when full of joy and hope, the bitter waters of his first repentance left behind, and his burden dropped at the foot of the Cross, "glistering with the baptismal dew," he sets out on his heavenward journey. But alas! he soon finds that the way is long, and that "without are fightings and within are fears." There are "fiery serpents and scorpions and drought" in his path. Yet when the fever of sin and an accusing conscience drinks up his spirit, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so is the Son of Man lifted up, that whoever believeth in Him should not perish;" and he looks unto Him and lives. And also, when "hungry and thirsty his soul fainteth in him," the Son of Man is "meat indeed" to his soul; and "going through the vale of misery he uses it for a well, and the rain filleth the pools" in the pouring out of God's Spirit upon him; and he "drinks of that spiritual Rock that follows him, and that Rock is Christ." Sometimes he is seduced into idolatry, or he is drawn away through "divers lusts and pleasures," or he gives way to unbelief and timidly refuses to advance when God calls him on; or he rushes into a fight with evil with an overbold estimate of his powers, and is overcome; he "thinks scorn of the pleasant land," and "in his heart turns back to Egypt;" he "starts aside like a broken bow;" from some point

of attainment he has reached he slides back into deadness and folly; he hears the thunders of the law and they alarm him, while yet he keeps its precepts written "on the fleshly tables of his heart." Seasons of refreshment come, and then of doubt and darkness. Still his course is onward on the whole. Every weary step brings him nearer to the rest. At last he stands on Pisgah, and looks across. He sees into Paradise. To him to die is gain. For "there remaineth a rest for the people of God."

XVII.

THE MANNA.

And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is Manna; for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. — EXODUS xvi. 15.

THE properties of this substance prove its miraculous quality. It went off like the dew beneath the morning sun; and yet, when gathered in season, it could be ground into a flour, and made into cakes, and would bear culinary heat. It fell in double quantity on the sixth day of the week, and on the seventh it fell not at all. Nature knows no such freaks and anomalies as these. The attempt, therefore, to confound it with the common manna of commerce, which is the product of a species of tamarisk tree, well known in the East, is futile. That substance is not found in sufficient quantities, nor has it qualities such as have been described. The manna that fed Israel was God's gift, supernaturally bestowed, to satisfy an unexampled want.

They had not gone far into the wilderness when the question of supplies began to assume a serious aspect. If the country could feed the indigenous population, it could hardly bear the sudden addition of six hundred thousand men, with numerous flocks and herds. Now, they thought of Egypt and the plenty it had afforded them, and began to hanker after their old state of servitude with its accompanying abundance. In their unreasoning discontent, they charged Moses with being

the author of their distress, and showed plainly that the passage of the sea had not altered their character, but that they were the same people, who, more than forty years before, had spurned his intervention through fear of Pharaoh's wrath, and who, just now, had been "disobedient at the sea, even at the Red Sea,"—fickle, irresolute, weak-hearted, such men as the curse of slavery makes wherever its blighting shadow falls. Yet God is long-suffering, indulgent, pitiful. And so, "at their desire He brought quails; and He fed them with the bread of Heaven. So man did eat angel's food, for He gave them meat enough."

The account runs thus: "They took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came into the wilderness of Sin which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt." They had now been out on their migration a month, a time within which they doubtless had expected to reach the confines of Canaan. Their Egyptian stores were exhausted. Elim, with its dates and fountains, was left behind. They had come upon a bare and sterile portion of the wilderness. They saw before them nothing but a barren waste, that could afford no sustenance to man or beast. Now, for the first time, they realized what their desert life was to be, what deprivation and hardship it involved. The prospect before them was, indeed, gloomy and repulsive. They desired to return to their servitude in Egypt, and purchase plenty at the expense of freedom. And they visited Moses with bitter taunts and reproaches, as the author of their misery, deeming themselves the dupes of his fine but fallacious promises. "And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured

against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: and the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assemblage with hunger."

"To still this unbelieving yet not unnatural clamor, the Lord sent the desponding people a promise of extraordinary relief. And the promise was followed by a punctual and a speedy fulfillment." "In the morning the dew lay round about the camp. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar-frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is Manna: for they wist not what it was." The word Manna signifies What is it? And thus the question of wonder and curiosity which arose upon its first appearance remained as its permanent name, the What-is-it, the food of mystery. "And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat." And every hour developed new wonders in it. They gathered it for food according to the direction of Moses, and there was an omer for every man, about three quarts of our measure. And there was exactly that measure for each one; so that while some gathered more, some less, "when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack." The fruit of their labor was equalized, all had equal shares without regard to their difference of diligence and ability. There was no superfluity, and no deficiency. An unseen Hand had invisibly interposed to disappoint the

avarice that would hoard, and to supply the neglect or weakness that had fallen short. Superfluity for none, sufficiency for all, was the result. Nor could any one, by stinting his consumption, save any part of his portion for the future. If any of it was left till the morning, when the new supply was to come, "it bred worms and stank," it was worthless and loathsome.

And now, as the close of the week drew near, it exhibited a new phenomenon. "On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers to a man," six quarts apiece. And the surplus beyond the day's necessity underwent no change, as on other days, but continued fresh and palatable. And Moses explained the strange circumstance to them by telling them that it was a provision for the Sabbath, divinely sent to mark the sanctity of that institution, which he evidently speaks of as familiar to them, "made for man" as it was from the creation, and now renewed after its temporary suspension under an oppression that took no account of conscientious scruples. "And it came to pass that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none," a pretty distinct hint that nobody gains anything by working on Sundays.

And the people ground it in mills, and made cakes of it, and baked it. "It was like coriander seed, and the taste was like wafers made with honey," — a farinaceous substance, nutritious, and not unpalatable. It fell, with unvarying punctuality, forty years. "And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, till they came to a land inhabited. They did eat manna, until they came to the borders of the land of Canaan." "The manna," the author of Joshua is careful to tell us, "ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the

old corn of the land," when they had crossed over Jordan, and were encamped before Jericho. Not till the necessity had entirely come to an end did the supernatural supply cease, and the extraordinary give place to the ordinary.

Yet, it is evident that this way of feeding Israel was not altogether satisfactory to them. Their sustenance was wholesome and ample, but it was simple and uniform. They grew weary of the sameness, and hankered after variety and luxury. And God punished them, as He often does, by gratifying their wishes. He sent them quails in boundless numbers; and the sudden change from a plain and carefully measured diet, to a surfeit of unbounded indulgence in animal food, brought on sickness, which cost many of them their lives, and made the dainty food they had longed for loathsome and detestable. "He gave them their own desire; they were not estranged from their lust. But while the meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel." Such was the punishment of their discontent. "Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire." "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content."

The sustenance of Israel in the desert was then a miracle, or a constant succession of miracles of diurnal recurrence during forty years. But why is this incredible? Intrinsically, is it any more remarkable than the way in which we are fed? Less so, if anything, because it is less complex. We see a grain of wheat. If we had never seen one before we might take it for a yellow pebble stone. We should never dream of its growing and becoming the parent of other grains of

wheat. Least of all should we think of putting it into the dark, cold ground, and covering it out of sight, to effect that result. But if, in some way, we have come to the knowledge of this wonderful property of this seeming pebble, we bury it in the earth; and then, by and by, it sprouts, and sends up out of the earth a plant, which becomes taller by degrees, and, at last, bears on its top a little spike of just such yellow pebbles as that from which it came. The plant became green, which was not the color of the grain or of the ground. And it has taken up out of the ground the water and the earth, and turned them into substances utterly unlike them, and used them to supply the matter by which, in some marvellous way, the augmentation of the plant is carried on. Now there is nothing strange to us in this, and it seems to be perfectly natural for it to be so, simply because we are familiar with it, and we see it constantly with our eyes, and we regard it as a thing of course. But now suppose God were in the habit of feeding us by sending down these pellets from the sky, we should know just as much about the process of their production as we do now, and it would seem just as natural to us. And then, if, at some time, God should see fit to intermit this method, and give an assemblage of men food by vegetation, that would be a miracle, and some wiseacre who had never seen it might say it was absurd and incredible, and pronounce the account of it a fabrication.

The fact simply is, that God, in the resources of His power, has different ways of feeding men. He chooses one of them for ordinary use. But if, for some wise end, at some time He sees fit to suspend the use of it, and employ another, He is perfectly able to do it.

The latter is intrinsically just as probable as the first. And it is miraculous only as it is uncommon, and a departure from God's customary way of acting. If we might surmise a reason of God's preference of the method of feeding men which He usually employs, it is that it gives man something to do in furnishing his own support, which is salutary to him, and conducive to his health of mind and body. But if it shall please God to isolate any people for a time, and deprive them of the means of raising their food by tillage, it becomes at once probable that He will substitute for it some mode of sustenance better fitted to their condition; and so, to Israel in the desert, manna is more probable than the product of cornfields.

There are several things here that deserve special consideration.

The manna was a daily provision. Each day brought its supply, and each day consumed it. Night found a complete destitution; morning brought a frugal plenty. No art could create an overplus; for the fetid mass that alone remained was but a satire on the unwise care. And so accumulation was impossible. There could never be any manna to be a commodity for merchandise, none for a feast of unusual or uncommon luxury and abundance.

Now, we are not living under a supernatural and extraordinary regimen, but under one which is ordinary and natural. And yet there is analogy enough between Israel's case and ours to make it monitory and profitable to us. It teaches us that, disguised a little from our eyes by the circumstances of our case, we are really living always on daily supplies, and so admonishes us to a limitation of our cares and reliances to brief periods in advance of the present moment, on

account of their futility and deceptiveness. God was pleased, in the case of these Israelites, to lift off the vail, and show them how men live, all men as truly as they, and has put it on record in His Word, that we, too, may look and learn the same profitable lesson. And it is in the same spirit that our Saviour has taught us to pray for "our daily bread," not for the bread of our lifetime, not even for the bread of to-morrow, but simply for the bread needful for to-day, that this doctrine of our continual and minute dependence might stand incorporated into Christian prayer as a necessary element of it as long as Christians shall obey their Master's precept, "After this manner pray ye." And this prescription of the prayer is matched by the exhortation in the Sermon on the Mount, "Take no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," — and so, too, is its good.

For let us consider under what contingencies and conditions we have what we call our own, and we shall see how complete is our dependence on God for power to retain or to enjoy it. When we lie down upon our beds at night to sleep, we do, in truth, take leave of the world and of all things in it; and we can never say that our leave-taking is not final. If God stop the breath of the sleeper by the fiat of His will, the gold in the man's coffers, the pleasant fields he has called by his own name, the houses "ceiled with cedar and painted with vermilion," the "much goods laid up for many years," are gone from him forever. There is no poverty like the grave's. "Naked he returns to go as he came, and there is nothing of his labor that he may carry away in his hand." And, therefore, if he awakes to find it his, it is because God gives it to him afresh,

and renews in the morning the grant which the evening made void, even He whose "mercies are new every morning," and of whom it is written, "Great is His faithfulness." "He accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they all are the work of His hands. In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand." "This night thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Not thine they are, except as God makes them thine by a daily gift, as truly as He gave the daily manna to Israel. Or if thou continuest, thy goods may not. The fire consumes, and the sea engulfs; the folly or the treachery of man dissipates and destroys; and he that lies down a rich man awakes a beggar. God that gave us wealth or competency to-day must give it to us again to-morrow; or it will find us stripped and needy. But if, by some godless hoarding, in forgetfulness of its source, we keep it, it is a having that is no having. It turns upon our hands into foulness and stench, like the manna unwisely reserved; and though that corruption be in the soul, and not in the outward and visible life, surely, it is not the less real. What so vile and odious as the soul of a miser? The manna teaches us the great and profitable lesson of our complete and ever recurring dependence.

Again, the manna, though given of God, in the method of its bestowment recognized and employed human agency. It came down from Heaven; but men must gather it, or it came down in vain. Nay, it soon exhaled, and was no longer within their reach. It did not come into their dwellings, but only on to

the ground around them, and it must be brought into their tents by their own hands; and then it was crude, and must undergo processes conducted by human labor before it was fit for food. Here, then, in a case clearly and strikingly miraculous, there was a margin left for man's exertions and industry. And it was purposely left; for it was as easy for God to do without any such intermediate agency as to employ it, and to set down before every Israelite his portion of manna ready for immediate use as to give it to him as He did. But this is quite according to the analogy of God's ways. Miracle is dispensed sparingly, economically, in order, it might seem, to leave room for the exercise of human powers as the condition of its benefits. And, perhaps, nowhere is this more conspicuous in Scripture than in connection with this matter of sustenance. When the widow's oil was multiplied by Elisha, it ran as long as they provided vessels; but when they ceased to provide vessels "it stayed." When our Saviour fed the multitude with a few loaves and fishes, though they certainly were of no account in the transaction, He required them to be used. And when, after His resurrection, He fed His disciples on the shore of the lake with food miraculously furnished, He still required them to "bring of the fishes which they had caught" themselves, to mingle the fruits of their own toil with the supernatural gifts of God.

The lesson is of large application. When God bestows His grace upon us, and begins a good work in us, implanting the germ of a new life, it is that we may have something to work with and to work upon, and not that what is given us may be let alone to work out its blessed result by its own operation. The exhortation, the encouragement is, "Work out your own

salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." And so in natural things. The field of the slothful is "all grown over with briers and thorns," but "the hand of the diligent maketh rich." And yet God must send His sun and rain. He does; but in vain without our endeavor. There is this mixture of the divine and human in the acquisition of all good. Nothing good for man without God; nothing from God for man without man.

Once more, see the regard to the Sabbath which marked the gift of the manna. When the Sabbath came it was suspended; yet the day before twice the amount was given to provide against any deficiency, and exempted from the law of quick decay, in order that it might answer its end. Could there be a more emphatic sanction of the Sabbath as a divine institution, or a clearer assurance that men shall not be losers by its observance? To provide for its being kept holy, the bread of six days with it is made equal to the bread of seven days without it. Shall we suppose that this law terminated with that occasion? or that it permanently operates in human affairs, and was, in that instance, only unveiled as a specimen of its working? We need not doubt that it was the latter. The physical constitution of man, and the structure of his social state, make the Sabbath a great boon to him, aside from religious considerations. "The Sabbath was made for man;" and men are never losers by keeping God's commandments. God is too just and too generous a Master ever to suffer this to be. The aggregate of human labor and of human productiveness is never lessened by keeping it; probably they are even enlarged. And there is in it a gain to the im-

mortal soul, to which earthly profit is as the small dust of the balance.

Finally, see in the manna a type of Christ, and the nutriment He affords to our hungry and destitute souls. We do not take up this similitude arbitrarily; we have His own express sanction for it. When the Jews said to Him, "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert," hoping, evidently, for a repetition of the miracle of feeding the multitude, He said to them, "Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven, but my Father giveth you the true Bread from Heaven, for the Bread of God is He which cometh down from Heaven and giveth life unto the world," suggesting a higher want than any of the body, of which He was the parallel and appropriate supply. And, indeed, that want is everywhere, and day by day pressing upon the souls of men; and of it Christ is the only and the sufficient supply. As touching spiritual things, we are, indeed, in the barren wilderness. There is nothing here to meet and satisfy our soul's want. "The sea saith, It is not in me, and the depth saith, It is not in me." Riches, and glory, and knowledge, and voluptuousness, do not satiate the soul. Still does it hunger after God's favor and immortal blessings. Jesus can appease the hunger. He will appease the hunger of all who come to Him. He is appeasing the hunger day by day of all who come to Him day by day. The heavenly manna, the true Bread from Heaven, is granted to us, not in one great gift, but dealt out to us anew in sufficient portions as our want recurs, and as every day brings fresh evidence and sense of its necessity. This is the "Bread that cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life to the world." "Lord, evermore give us this Bread," and nourish us up with it unto life eternal.

XVIII.

THE LAW.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to Me into the Mount, and be there: and I will give unto thee Tables of Stone, and a Law, and Commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them. — EXODUS xxiv. 12.

To discuss the Mosaic Law to any purpose in a single exercise like this is not by any means easy, yet I must attempt to do it, that I may not stretch out this course of lectures to an unreasonable and wearisome length. My treatment of it must necessarily be cursory and general. Into its details I cannot enter.

The Israelites now stood under the awful brow of Sinai. They had traversed the stretch of country between their encampment at Elim and the foot of the mountain, with only one or two incidents of importance. At Rephidim the supply of water from natural sources failed them. The people in their distress spake against Moses and against God; and whilst they were "almost ready to stone" the former, dared even impiously to question the power of the latter to relieve them. By God's command Moses touched a neighboring rock with his rod, and "the waters gushed out," and their wants were supplied. And this rocky fountain became in some way what St. Paul calls it, "the Rock that followed them," securing to them a sufficiency of water through their pilgrimage, at least, till they came to Kadesh, near the border of the promised land, becom-

ing thus an emblem of Christ and the abiding efficacy of His grace: "That rock was Christ." The place was called Massah and Meribah, signifying Temptation, and Strife or Provocation.

Here, too, they encountered Amalek in warlike array to arrest their progress, and Joshua, beginning thus early to show his fitness to succeed Moses in the leadership of the nation, with a body of men under his command "discomfited them with the edge of the sword;" while Moses, with the rod of God in his hand, sat by upon a rock, stayed up on either side by Aaron and Hur, the latter of whom, according to old Jewish tradition, was the husband of his sister Miriam, and by its mystic power secured the victory. This was their first taste of war, and Joshua's first martial achievement. And Moses in commemoration of it "built here an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi," that is, The Lord my Banner. Moses was now in his old haunts, where in other days he had tended Jethro's flocks; and Jethro, with whom Zipporah and her children had taken refuge pending the issue of his embassy in Egypt, restored them to him, and rejoiced his weariness by hearty counsel.

And now came the great scene of the giving of the Law. The physical manifestations that attended it were grand and solemn, in correspondence with the august character of the occasion. It was the giving forth of his duty to every individual man; and it was also the grant of a charter for the framing of a nation and a Church. The mountain quaked. A cloud of the deepest blackness rested on its summit. The voice of God was heard audibly issuing from the darkness. Moses was called up into the Mount to an audience with God, and abode there forty days. The great fun-

damental and unchangeable principles of duty which underlie all law that is right, were first orally enunciated from the top of the mountain in the hearing of the people, by the voice of God, and these ten commandments were graven by His finger on two tables of stone. And then, all the multifarious precepts and prohibitions which fill out the Law were given to Moses to be promulgated to the people.

The richest imagery of all later Hebrew writers is derived from this transaction of the giving of the Law; and it seems as if the thought of it could never touch the mind of an Israelite, without setting it aglow, and awaking it to high imaginings and eloquent words.

"Onwards and upwards, exulting in their first victory," says Dean Stanley, "they advanced deeper and deeper into the mountain ranges, they knew not whither," the manna daily falling, the punctual water rising at their feet. "They only knew that it was for some great end, for some mighty sacrifice, for some solemn disclosure, such as they had never before witnessed. Onwards they went, and the mountains closed around them; upwards through winding valley, and under high cliff, and over rugged pass, and through gigantic forms, on which the marks of creation even now seem fresh and powerful; and at last through all the different valleys, the whole body of the people were assembled. On their right hand and on their left rose long successions of lofty rocks, forming a vast avenue, like the approaches which they had seen leading to the Egyptian temples between colossal figures of men and of gods. At the end of this broad avenue, rising immediately out of the level plain on which they were encamped, towered the massive cliffs of Sinai; like

the huge altar of some natural temple; encircled by peaks of every shape and height, the natural pyramids of the desert. In this sanctuary, secluded from all earthly things, raised high above even the wilderness itself, arrived, as it must have seemed to them, at the very end of the world, they waited for the Revelation of God." It came; and it is the Mosaic Law.

Two preliminary things are to be said about the Law. First, it is not at all systematic. It is not codified, to use our modern phrase. There is no grouping of its enactments according to their subjects and relations, no distributing into titles, and heads, and sections. It is not scientific. It is altogether inartificial, a promiscuous throwing together of precepts without order or arrangement, just as unlike any body of law that man would make, as the four Gospels are unlike any history of our Lord Jesus Christ that man would indite. Both are not of man, but of God. And yet — and this is the second thing to notice — in all its rudeness of form, the Law given to Moses is the foundation of all subsequent law, and is the bottom on which all systems of legislation in all Christian and civilized nations rest at this day. Justinian built his code upon its principles, and it thus became the foundation of the civil law of Europe. Modern legislators do little more than modify and adapt it to circumstances. The local and the temporary in it have, indeed, disappeared, but the substance of it remains. It is of God. And the Lord Jesus says, "Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled." The Law that was given by Moses, and the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ, are the two things that have made an indelible mark upon this world. They are of God.

Now this Law given by Moses involves three distinct categories or departments of legislation, the moral, and the ceremonial, and the civil, according as it looks at a man as a man, as a worshipper, or as a citizen, in his personal, ecclesiastical, and political relations. Not that these are separated and carefully kept apart in the Law. Rather are they singularly blended together and enunciated promiscuously, in utter disregard of these distinctions, as though the legislator were quite unconscious of them. And, if I mistake not, there is design in this, and utility. The purpose is to show upon what a perfectly equal footing they all stand in point of obligation; and how, as all equally parts of the will of God, they are equally parts of human duty, and that men may not pick out such parts of God's Law as suit their convenience or commend themselves to their intelligence, but take it as a unit, the emanation of that Infinite Mind to whom they owe entire subjection and unquestioning service.

Look then at the Moral Law as it is contained in the Law of Moses. This is in its substance older than that Law, old as Creation, old as eternity, for it rests on everlasting and unchangeable principles and distinctions. This is that natural law which the mind of man when it is set before him instinctively approves and accepts as the right rule of character and action, and which the conscience of man would itself set forth as such, if it were free from the perverting force of sin in himself, and from the influence of false opinion and corrupt habit in the world around him. This is what St. Paul means by man's being a "law unto himself," and by the heathen's "showing the work of the law written in their hearts." The Ten Commandments which stand as the frontispiece of Moses' Law embody

this intrinsic morality. The law of the Sabbath is alone in any sort an exception; and that, coeval with man's being and coextensive with his duration, is so nearly akin to the Moral Law that it scarcely needs to be distinguished from it. And moral precepts intended for carrying the principles of the Decalogue out into the details of practice are thickly sprinkled through all parts of the Law.

Nor is the Mosaic legislation unmindful of the spirituality of morals, the right and wrong of thoughts and feelings as well as of acts and words. Our Saviour's summary of the Moral Law borrows the very words of the Mosaic Law to find for itself expression: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The Law abounds in precepts of humanity, of compassion, of tender considerateness towards poverty, helplessness, age, and distress of every kind, and draws within its wide embrace of love the very brute creation. Thus much may suffice for the Moral Law. There is nowhere anything to be found like it for purity, benevolence, and equity, which has not come forth from the Mosaic fountain.

The Ceremonial Law. This is what St. Paul calls "the law of commandments contained in ordinances," and which St. Peter does not scruple to denominate "a burden which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear." It comprises all that portion of the Law of Moses which has reference to the external duties and observances of religion, all that was prescribed to the Israelite as a worshipper, all that pertained to him in his relation to the Church of God, of which, as an Israelite, he was a member, the nation and the Church

then being the same. It was the Ecclesiastical Law of Israel; and it comprised all that belonged to the visible service and worship of God, over and above the precepts of morality. It embraced the priesthood and its functions and duties; the tabernacle, its construction, furniture, and arrangements; all the ritual forms of the national religion, its sacrifices, offerings, lustrations; and the observances, not only public but private, not only joint but individual, which fell within its purview.

And there was almost nothing that did not fall within its purview, scarcely an act of life with which in some way it did not connect itself. So that the ritual of the Law enveloped the Israelite as with an atmosphere, and forced him continually to live and move under its superintendence and direction. Like the roots of a tree, it permeated every part of society, and intertwined itself with every department of man's social being, wrapping up all its contents in the tough net-work of its fine, strong, and tenacious fibres. It was burdensome, because it was minute, complicated, arbitrary, and expensive, requiring the man to be constantly on the lookout lest he should contravene or neglect some of its multifarious demands, and so contract ceremonial guilt and uncleanness with the disabilities and penalties which attached to them; and because in the multiplicity and costliness of its requirements it involved large expenditures of time, labor, and money. Many of its enactments which seem to us capricious or unmeaning were intended as safeguards against idolatry and heathenism; or were civilizing prescriptions, tending to promote cleanliness and decency by making them religious duties, or connecting them with observances whose sacredness would secure attention to them.

But throughout this great mass of onerous legislation there runs one quality which is its special characteristic. Everywhere it gives evidence that it does not end in itself, but looks forward to something beyond. It is "a shadow of good things to come; not the very image of the things," but such a faint portraiture of them as is made when the intercepted light projects the form of objects upon a wall. So the Law in this part of it, as the Moral Law is in another way, was "a schoolmaster," or rather the servant that leads the child to school, to bring men unto Christ.

Throughout it was symbolic, pointing to Christ in multitudes of images and forms, emblematic, prophetic, typical, representing Christ in varieties of ways, as "of sin the double cure, to save from wrath and make us pure." Its rites are either rites of expiation or of purification; they have this general character; and thus they foreshow Him, who by His precious Death and Passion has procured forgiveness of all that is past for all that believe on His Name and trust in His merits, — which is our justification; and by the gracious influences of His Spirit renews us unto holiness and willing obedience, — which is our sanctification. Justification and sanctification, distinct yet inseparable, the two parts of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, the Mosaic Law in multiform ways foreshadowed and prefigured. They are its burden, its ever recurring lesson. The blood of bulls and goats that could never take away sin by its own efficacy is that Blood which cleanseth from all sin shed once for all in the fullness of time. And the blood sprinkled on the man or his services is the application of Christ's Death in its expiatory virtue to human guilt, to procure for man pardon and reconciliation to God. And at the same time the ceremo-

nies of purification, which are coupled with these sacrificial observances, point not less clearly to the necessity of holiness as the fruit and evidence of justification, and attest our need of being renewed unto holiness, in the spirit of our minds, in the actions of our lives; of having our "consciences sprinkled from dead works to serve the living God."

We are, finally, to look at the Law of Moses in its civil relations, as a code of criminal law, of political jurisprudence, to regulate the affairs of Israel as a nation, and prescribe rules of action and procedure for its judges and tribunals. And the fact that there is such an element in the Mosaic Law disposes at once of almost all in it that has ever been made the subject of cavil, or criticism, or censure. The standard of legislation for a community is not exact holiness, but such an approximation to it as the grade of civilization and public sentiment will endure. A wise legislator knows that in straining up the rule of practice in a given particular beyond what the opinion of the people will bear, he defeats his objects, and provokes a spirit of defiance which will be likely to lead towards making the law a dead letter. God in legislating for Israel in civil things, provided such laws as were suitable to the condition of such a people as Israel then was; and while He held the man responsible at His own bar according to the rules of strict morality, laid down also the offenses for which he should be liable to answer at the public tribunals, and the rules by which those tribunals should be controlled in the exercise of their functions. The civil courts must confine themselves within these limits, for the public good. For all that lay beyond them God would deal with men Himself directly, either in the just retributions of His prov-

idence, or in the solemn adjudications of the world unseen.

Divorce, polygamy, concubinage, slavery, retaliation, harsh and cruel penalties, none of those things are to be regarded as morally right and agreeable to the mind of God, because they are permitted and regulated in the Mosaic Law. If you will look at these laws you will find that in almost every instance they are restraints imposed on existing evils, intended to mitigate their severity and repress them as far as the state of society would warrant. God is wise, and is not like some human legislators, who fail to do anything because they undertake to do too much, and to accomplish what is impracticable. Evidently, the Israelites were at their coming out of Egypt a semi-barbarous people, that had not attained a high grade of civilization and social enlightenment. And their civil law was adapted to their case. Bishop Shuttleworth has said this a great deal better than I can: let him speak. "Common candor, and a little degree of reflection, will serve to show us that the objections raised against the Divine origin of the Mosaic institutions, on this account, are without the slightest foundation of justice. Once admitting the possibility of the Divine Being condescending to legislate, in a secular sense, for any society of human creatures, it appears to follow, as a matter of absolute necessity, that the regulations intended to operate practically upon the habits of the governed must have reference to the existing state of manners and knowledge: and not only so, but, unless we would assert, that a people thus divinely instructed should also be forced, by a continued miracle, into a precocity of civilization naturally unattainable by any other than a very slow and tedious

process, we must admit also that a legislature, even of this high order, must be content to tolerate, for a while, those minor abuses, which, humanly speaking, it is impossible immediately to eradicate. Under such circumstances, the true wisdom would appear to be to soften, by the interposition of sober and salutary precautions, the rash impetuosity of rude justice, as usually administered by nations so little advanced in cultivation as these now alluded to, and whilst appearing to connive at usages which the highest reason cannot altogether approve, to set quietly into action better principles, the sure ultimate result of which would be the eradication of the original abuse by a necessary improvement of the moral habits." In my own words now: The Law originated none of these abuses nor enjoined them, but simply, finding them in existence and too closely interwoven in the fabric of social life to be violently wrenched away, contented itself with regulating and limiting their operation, and setting in motion influences which would sooner or later cause them wholly to disappear.

"The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." Indeed the Law makes the sin; for "sin is the transgression of the Law," and "where no Law is there is no transgression." But "Christ is the end of the Law to every one that believeth;" and "the Law is our schoolmaster," or rather the servant to lead us to school, and bring us to Christ, who is Himself the Schoolmaster, and who teaches us the lesson of heavenly wisdom, whereby alone we can be saved. The Law brings us to Christ; the Moral Law by its clear discovery of our guilt and condemnation leading us to Him "who was made a curse for us,"

and by whose sacrifice and mediation alone we obtain remission of our sins and peace with our offended Judge; the Ceremonial Law, all whose ordinances and ritual forms pointed to Christ as their substance and fulfillment, gaining in the light of His finished work of redemption a significancy and a force which they had not in themselves, "beggarly elements" without Him, but in Him beautiful shadows of good things cast forward on the world in its early twilight till the day dawned and the Day Star arose; and even the Civil Law, raised to that purity and height of moral perfection which in the old time it vainly struggled after amidst the world's darkness and ignorance, and brought up to the true standard of virtue and righteousness as the Christian Law, the holy rule of Christ's example and Christ's heavenly teaching.

O, indeed, Christ has made all things new for us. And while, "what the Law could not do," He has done by His "precious bloodshedding," in procuring for us pardon for the past and "grace to help" for the future, He writes the "New Commandment" in our hearts, that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," might be in us a "law of liberty," and God's service in keeping His commandments be to us perfect freedom. O let us not slight "so great salvation," but "yield ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God." "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words; but ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable Company of Angels,

to the General Assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new Covenant, and to the Blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh."

XIX.

THE GOLDEN CALF.

They have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. — EXODUS xxxii. 8.

WHILE Moses was in the Mount with God, an event occurred at the foot of the mountain which threatened to defeat his work for Israel altogether; or, at least, to change altogether its character and his own relation to it. The pressure of his authority being removed, and poorly supplied by the weaker influence of Aaron and Hur, who constituted a sort of regency while he was away, the people broke out into open mutiny, and clamorously called on Aaron to make them idols to complete a work, which the Jehovah, of whom Moses had spoken to them, seemed to have forsaken in incapacity or caprice: "Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him." So quickly had the impression of the stupendous manifestations of Jehovah's power, which had attended their escape, faded from their minds; and so little were they prepared to trust God when the sensible tokens of His immediate and active agency in their affairs were suspended. "They forgat God their Saviour, who had done so great things in Egypt, wondrous works in the land of Ham, and fearful things by the Red Sea."

Their weary march thus far gave them no visible signs of a happy issue. They were not even moving in the direction of their goal. Deeper and deeper every day had plunged them into a country of intricate defiles and rugged heights. Day by day their bread was still given them, and their water was sure. The glowing cloud still marked out their path; yet that had now remained stationary for a long season, and it seemed to have rested in that dreary solitude as though it had reached its ultimate destination. Meanwhile, their human leader had mysteriously disappeared; the influence of his inspiring confidence and resolution no longer operated to cheer and encourage them; that "God of their fathers," whose behests, under his guidance, they had obeyed, seemed to have betrayed and deserted them; and the weaker will of Aaron had no magnetism to draw them on, and keep them hopeful and steady. The God in whom their nascent nationality had taken its rise, it might appear lacked power or disposition to finish it. Weary, disappointed, impatient, anxious, desponding, they bethought themselves of a divinity of the land they had deserted, under whose seemingly beneficent protection Egypt enjoyed prosperity and peace. Since Jehovah would not care for them, they would seek the patronage of Apis. So "they made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they turned their glory into the similitude of a calf that eateth hay," the figure under which Apis was worshipped in Egypt. Aaron, the great High-Priest, was shaken by their importunity, or overawed by their violence. Out of the golden jewels which were, doubtless, a part of their Egyptian spoils freely brought to him for the purpose, he formed a molten calf, and "fashioned it with a grav-

ing tool,"—for Egyptian art as well as Egyptian folly had followed them into the desert, as we see more strikingly in the construction of the tabernacle.

"And they rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." And what this play was, heathenism, wherever it has prevailed, will at once teach us. A three days' festival was kept with the licentious rites of song and dance which they had learned in Egypt, words of erotic passion, and lascivious motions and gestures, ending in lewdness and debauch. The taint of idolatry as well as of slavery they had carried into the desert, and having made the idol, they worshipped it as idols are wont to be worshipped, as they had seen Apis worshipped in the country they had come from.

Doubtless, their ideas of Jehovah were crude and indistinct. He was to the minds, at least of the less enlightened among them, and these must have been the vast majority, rather their national divinity, than that only God who admits of no compeer, and stands alone in His single, undivided, exclusive majesty, as the Creator in whom all things that are made "live and move and have their being." The spirituality of God, as without body or any species of visible form or presentment, is a difficult idea for an uncultured mind, familiar only with what is material and sensible, to receive and retain. "They saw not God; and yet they were to believe that He was there. They were to make no sign or likeness of God, and yet they were to believe that He was then and always their one and only Lord." "The revelation of Sinai has prevailed. Slowly, and with many reverses, did the great truth, there first imparted, gain possession of the hearts of

Israel, and, through them, of the whole world,—that we are neither to imagine that we see God when we do not, nor that because we do not see Him, are we to doubt that He has been, is, and yet shall be. This was the marvel which the Jewish worship presented even to the best and wisest heathens, who were perplexed by what seemed to them a religion without a God."

To such a spiritual conception the Israelites in the desert with their low grade of mental culture were scarcely competent; and when they no longer had Moses to lean upon for its maintenance, they lost their hold of it; and seeing no signs of any further intervention in their behalf put forth by that unseen Deity under whose alleged guidance they had left a land of plenty for a "waste howling wilderness," they fell grovelling down to a visible and congenial divinity, in whom their wise, and rich, and powerful masters had trusted with apparent benefit to themselves, and under whose protection they were anxious to regain that land whose tasks and burdens, lightened by its compensatory flesh pots and fruits, they began to think that they had unwisely forsaken for a barren idea of freedom and independence. And this tendency, though repressed, was never thoroughly eradicated. Notably, it reappeared in the calves of Jeroboam. And ever has it been pushing itself up into new life, by the debased representations of Christian symbolism in corrupt portions of the Church; and it is ever dangerously near when thoughts, and attitudes, and postures seek to localize the unseen Redeemer, or overlay His worship with ritualistic excesses.

On this scene of impious revelry Moses suddenly intruded, when he came down from the Mount with

the two tables of the Law in his hand. As he beheld it his work seemed ruined; and in his dismay and bitter indignation, he cast the two tables out of his hands and brake them, in token of the prostration and destruction of his hopes. His attendant Joshua, who had accompanied him in his ascent, when "he heard the noise of the people as they shouted, said unto Moses, There is a sound of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome; but the noise of them that sing do I hear." The feeble remonstrances and apologies of his timid and yielding brother could not deter him from a solemn act of severity in which at once he might vindicate God's government, and impress upon his people an awful evidence of their guilt and folly. "He took the calf which they had made and burnt it with fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon water, and made the children of Israel to drink of it." The wooden image, coated with plates of gold, was consumed to ashes, as an emblematic expression of the wrath of that "God who is a consuming fire;" while the nauseous draught compounded of its dust, which they were compelled to drink, was to forewarn them how the curse of their transgression would incorporate itself into their very substance, and become an element of bitterness and disgust in their future lives.

And now an awful example was to be made, to show to men so little accustomed to be influenced by purely spiritual considerations, so much the slaves of sensuous impressions, the awful reality and power of the curse they had so rashly dared. Those who were on the Lord's side were called upon to offer themselves for such special service as the Lord might have for them

to do. The tribe of Levi offered themselves to be the executioners of the Lord's will; and by His command they went through the camp and slew about three thousand men. Doubtless something of clannish feeling mingled in their zeal, for Moses and Aaron were their tribesmen, and Aaron, by legitimate descent, was the tribe's chieftain. But their devotion to duty in this repulsive and painful work procured for them the reversal of Jacob's malediction, while yet its letter remained in force, so that, though "divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel," it was in the honorable office of ministering in divine things and teaching divine truths, as the priesthood of the nation. To this circumstance Moses refers in his dying blessing, where he says, "Who said to his father and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children;" and he adds, as the recompense of a devotion that rose so grandly above natural ties, "They shall teach Jacob thy covenant, and Israel thy laws; they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar."

Moses, type of the great Mediator, intercedes for the people, and God takes them again into His favor; while to His faithful and much enduring servant He vouchsafes such a glimpse of His glory as a mortal in the flesh may endure, putting him in a cleft of the rock, and while He passes by in some wonderful disclosure of His greatness and beauty, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in mercy and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and to the fourth generation."

This is that display of seemingly discordant but really harmonious attributes which have their true reconcilement in Him of whom Moses in the Law did write, in whose great salvation "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

Notice here the powerful, the almost inveterate effect of early circumstances, their mischiefs if they happen to be bad. No men that ever lived have ever seen more stupendous manifestations of God's presence and power, and of His immediate agency in their own behalf, than these people had seen. The gods of Egypt had been debased before their eyes, and her people horribly scourged. The Red Sea had been cleft in twain to afford them a passage. The skies had showered down bread, and were still bestowing it upon them day by day. The flinty rock had opened and poured forth water to alleviate their thirst. And they were even then standing at the foot of the mountain on which God had descended in fire and smoke, and from whose awful brow His great commands had been audibly uttered. And these prodigies were fresh. The rocking of the mountain had scarcely ceased, and they were living that day on the day's manna. And yet, no sooner is the spell of the great leader's mind broken by his absence, than old habits regain their power, and they make for themselves an Egypt in the wilderness.

They were fresh from slavery, and from the sight, and probably the practice, of idolatry. No doubt, with no outward institutions to keep it fresh, as they sank lower and lower in the degradation of their base condition, the true idea of God and of His worship, which their fathers brought into Egypt, grew fainter

and fainter, and their religious opinions and practices became more and more assimilated to the superstitions around them. And these were the associations of their childhood, and had grown into their souls with their advancing years. A violent wrench had disturbed and broken them up, and given other sentiments a temporary ascendency over them; but it had not extinguished them. And the moment that the antagonist faith fails to meet their expectations, and there is no master mind to restrain them, they fall down into their old habits of thought, and worship Apis with a vile ritual of lascivious songs and dances, and are ready, under his guidance, to go back to their flesh pots and their bondage.

Brethren, if we have Christian ideas, and they cleave to us like a part of our nature, it is largely because a merciful Providence has given us our birth and rearing in a Christian land, and some mother Lois and grandmother Eunice have implanted them too deeply to be moved. Let us learn a lesson of charity for others and of duty for ourselves. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

Notice, again, the vehement tendency of fallen men to the practice of idolatry. It may, indeed, since man's fall, be considered his normal state; and all divine teachings and institutions are means to resist and overcome it. The whole history of the human race is but one lengthened illustration of this truth, and nowhere is it seen more strikingly than in God's ancient people. Their annals are marked by relapse after relapse into it, and almost all the earnest exhortations of their prophets are directed to its cure. The tendency to localize and materialize the Deity, to ex-

hibit Him in symbolic forms, and then imagine them inhabited by the Deity, so as to be themselves objects of worship, and in the insufficiency of any one symbol to represent the manifoldness of God, to multiply symbols, and in multiplying symbols multiply gods, and in multiplying debase them, — this is the history of idolatry and polytheism, and of the awful moral debasement which has followed in their train. The Jewish law was God's protest against it, a protest, solemn as it was, frequently unheeded.

Nor has the Gospel proved altogether successful to bar out its insidious approaches; as is evident from the condition of a large portion of the Church in which inferior mediators have been clothed with powers simply of man's invention, so as to trench upon, and too often overshadow, the office of the one Mediator; and whose pictured or sculptured representations, supposed, like the idols of the heathen, to be occupied in some way by their presence, become the objects of a homage which no refined distinctions can guard from at least a dangerous nearness to idolatry. The emblems of the Saviour's Body and Blood, too, divinely ordained to represent them, and to be to the faithful a means of conveying to us "the benefits which we receive thereby," are, by the fiction of Transubstantiation, turned into the Saviour Himself, and adored as a present and visible divinity. Nor let us think that we are secure, and that the spirit of idolatry may not creep in and insinuate itself under our simpler forms. The origin of idolatrous worship is in symbol, in a relationship of resemblance, real or imaginary, between the object of worship and its outward representative. Symbol is beautiful and instructive, and worship without it is bare and unimpressive. And yet it is always

to be employed guardedly and temperately. The moment a symbol or any external circumstance of worship is taking the place of the object of worship, and we are ceasing to look through the symbol to the thing signified, idolatry is beginning; and if we set up our idols in our hearts, God will answer us according to our idols, not in peace but in anger. In the multiplication of such symbols, and in a pompous and gaudy worship, there is danger of this evil to our weak hearts, and it is better that they should be forborne. There is a medium between nakedness and an overloaded finery which a sound Christian discretion should aim at, and endeavor to find. Whenever men begin to think that Christ is so in the emblems of His Body and Blood that His presence is independent of the faith of the recipient, and that it remains after the sacramental act is consummated, they are passing the bounds of safety. And all gestures or acts in worship that seem to imply any such presence, or attach it to a particular spot, are dangerous. Our hearts are weak and unspiritual. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

XX.

THE SPIES.

So they went up and searched the land, from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath. — NUMBERS xiii. 21.

THE subject of this lecture will be the spies whom Moses sent up to survey the Land of Promise, and who, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, brought up an evil report of the land, whereby the people were terrified, and dissuaded from the enterprise of attempting to conquer it. They had moved on from Sinai, where we left them last, in the direction of Canaan; and were now not far from its southern frontier. To know what kind of a country it was, the character of its population, its means of defense, and the extent and species of warfare that would be needful to effect its subjugation, was now a matter of immediate and pressing interest to them; and to obtain this information the spies were sent forth.

But before considering this expedition and its results further, we must, in order to preserve the chain of events in the history, touch lightly on the minor incidents that fill up the intervening gap.

When God at the intercession of Moses had revoked His threat to withdraw His presence from the people in consequence of their idolatry and leave them to themselves, He remanded His servant to the Mount for a second conference of forty days. Then the pat-

tern of the tabernacle was showed him, with directions to construct it and arrange its services; the Law which he had before received was renewed and amplified; and two tables of stone containing the Ten Commandments "written with the finger of God," were given him to replace those which he had broken in the bitterness of his heart in view of the grievous lapse into which the people had fallen in his former absence.

When he came down from the Mount with the tables in his hands the second time, "the skin of his face shone." This was a minor transfiguration, in which the more complete and glorious transfiguration of Jesus was foreshown and typified. To this there is a parallel in the inferior glory of the Law and the greater glory of the Gospel. And it also emblemed the moral lustre of a life of communion with God. To hide this brightness from his awe-stricken companions, Moses put a veil over his face, signifying, as the Apostle tells us, the dimness of the Law as a disclosure of God's mind, and especially of His mercy; "which veil is done away in Christ." The tabernacle is now constructed under the direction of Bezaleel and Aholiab; the former, who was the chief of the two, was the grandson of Hur, — and, if Jewish tradition be right, of Miriam the sister of Moses. By them Moses made it according to the pattern showed him in the Mount, "to be the example and shadow of heavenly things" according to St. Paul, that is, the image and emblem of great spiritual truths.

They now keep the Passover; a form of benediction is prescribed; Moses' father-in-law is solicited to join them, and by the subsequent drift of the history we infer that he complied with the invitation; and they move on to Taberah. There the discontent and impa-

tience of the wayward people, which no display of God's greatness or of His goodness could prevail to cure, again break out. Some of them are consumed by fire from heaven, which is stayed by Moses' prayer, and this gives the place its name of Taberah, which signifies burning. But still the uneasiness of the people is not appeased. They grew weary of the simple diet of God's providing, and long for flesh and the dainties of Egypt. God punishes them, as He often punishes men, by letting them have their way. Quails are again sent, a surfeit ensues, and this induces a plague in which many die. And the place is called Kibroth-hattaavah, the graves of appetite.

To relieve Moses of some part of his oppressive burden, a portion of his prophetic spirit is conferred upon the seventy elders, whom he had previously selected to aid him, as we have seen, at the suggestion of Jethro; and when two of them, Eldad and Medad, who were not with the rest to receive the formal investiture of this great gift, still "prophesied in the camp," Moses exhibits his magnanimity in saying, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets."

And now, Moses, that his resemblance of the "Prophet like unto him" to come in after times, might not want an important feature of similarity, is tried with disaffection in his own family. "Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married." Whether Zipporah was now dead — we hear no more of her after the circumcision of Eliezer — and Moses had married again, or this was Zipporah herself, is disputed. The former supposition seems the more probable. The word rendered Ethiopian is properly Cushite, a descendant of Cush, one of the sons of Ham. There

were Asiatic as well as African Cushites. A tribe of them dwelt in this region in the neighborhood of Midian. Habakkuk speaks of them together,— "I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction, and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble." A woman of this tribe Moses had taken as the successor of Zipporah; and his brother and sister were displeased at this second alliance with a foreigner. But there was meaning in it. The many marriages of distinguished Israelites with Gentiles on record intimate God's purpose of mercy to the latter; and this comes out more clearly in Moses' great song, where he says, "Rejoice ye Gentiles with His people." Miriam, who seems to have been the instigator of the complaint, is punished with leprosy, and excluded from the camp seven days after she had been restored by the prayer of Moses.

And now their journeyings had brought them into proximity to the Holy Land, and they began to entertain the hope of soon reaching the goal of their lengthened aims. Moses, in preparation for that joyful event, is directed to send men to "search the land," to ascertain the character of the country and its resources, and put himself in possession of such facts, as would enable him to enter upon the work of acquiring it with advantage. Twelve men were selected for this purpose, one from each tribe, all principal men, "every one a ruler among them." Their names are given in the history, but none of them are otherwise distinguished in it save Joshua and Caleb. They were "to spy out the land of Canaan," "and see the land what it is, and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad, and what cities they be that they dwell in,

whether in tents or in strongholds, and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, and whether there be wood therein or not."

Such was their commission, and they seem to have executed it with thoroughness and fidelity; for, in the words of my text, "they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin" on its southern border, "to Rehob, as men come to Hamath," in the extreme north. "The entering in of Hamath" is often spoken of in Scripture as one of the extremities of Canaan. It was a small fertile district nestling under Mount Lebanon at the northeastern corner of Palestine, through which was the principal passage into the country from the direction of Damascus. At the end of forty days they returned with a glowing account of the beauty and productiveness of the country, bringing with them as a specimen of its fruits, a huge "cluster of grapes borne between two upon a staff," and also pomegranates and figs.

But as an offset to these attractions, they reported that "the cities were walled and very great," and that the inhabitants were a race of men of gigantic stature and strength; so that, however desirable the land might be, they could hardly hope to effect its conquest by such feeble means as alone they had at their disposal. They declared, moreover, that it was "a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof" — an obscure expression, which is, however, generally taken to mean that its fruitfulness is its bane, leading to continual strifes and conquests, wars and fightings for the possession of so valuable a territory. Its very desirableness made it a country whose inhabitants were devoured by the sword of its greedy neighbors. On the whole, the report of the commission pronounced

the acquisition of the country impracticable: "We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we." "There we saw the giants, the sons of Anak which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." While what may be called the minority report of Caleb and Joshua, more courageous men because men of more faith, urged immediate action with good assurance of success, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."

But the cowardly and unbelieving counsels of the majority prevailed; and in pursuance of them the poor-spirited company of freedmen, in a fresh paroxysm of terror and despondency, were again ready to renounce the authority of Moses, and "said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." To quiet this wretched tumult of disappointment and despair, the representations and persuasions of Joshua and Caleb availed little. "All the congregation bade stone them with stones."

A nation so incurably contumacious God now threatened utterly to disown and destroy, and proposed to make of Moses himself a new people, who should inherit the privileges which the Israelites had so senselessly forfeited. But Moses, with the unselfishness, magnanimity, and generosity which mark all his course, rejected the offer, and humbly besought God for His own honor to pardon the sin of the people. The petition prevailed, but the doom was denounced upon the people that they should not see the land they had so longed for; and it was decreed that none but Caleb and Joshua of all who were twenty years old and upward should enter on that goodly heritage. They

were accordingly commanded to turn again towards the Red Sea, and commence a new series of wanderings which were to last till the Lord's solemn threat had found its fulfillment. "So He said He would have destroyed them, had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the gap, to turn away His wrathful indignation, lest He should destroy them. Yea, they thought scorn of that pleasant land, and gave no credence unto His word; but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the Lord." "Therefore their days did He consume in vanity, and their years in trouble." The prize that seemed almost within their grasp removed to a hopeless distance; the bright vision that had cheered their weary march so long faded utterly away; a life of hardship and aimless wandering alone remained to them; and a grave in lonely wastes unknown and uncared for was at last to receive their mortal remains.

Centuries after, the Psalmist takes up and utters the voice of solemn warning that their case gives forth: "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known My ways: unto whom I sware in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest." And after other centuries an Apostle repeats the admonition, and it is as appropriate and as needful now as in his time: "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation." "For some when they had heard, did provoke: was it not all they that came out of Egypt by Moses? But with whom was He

grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." So does history continually repeat itself. Such melancholy sameness is in the faults of successive ages. So do the warnings of old time address themselves with an undiminished freshness to us and the people of our own time. Let us give heed to the instruction.

A single false step may — often does — bring with it a final and irretrievable forfeiture of good when the good is conspicuous and attainable. This is true in temporal things. In all lives there are crises, more or less observable, on which the complexion of all their future depends. In the case of those in whom we are interested we often watch their decision in such crises with a trembling anxiety, unable to interfere efficiently, though we know that their destiny is hanging in the balance, because the human will is sovereign, and men's choices are their own. Some great advantage is set before us that if improved will be the making of us; but we are incredulous, we doubt its value, or reality, or the sincerity of the offer, or it is not quite to our taste, not the fulfillment of some cherished dream, or we lack courage and energy to encounter the difficulties, to incur the dangers that lie in the way of its attainment. There are walled cities to be stormed, sons of Anak to be fought, and the difficulty and peril are magnified by a timorous imagination. We refuse, and the golden opportunity is let slip and will not come again. There is nothing for us but a life of poverty,

of obscurity, of meanness, of hard, unfruitful toil, and meagre results. On the other hand, "there is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune;" and the right step once taken, the dangers and hindrances disappear, and a plain path lies open to success and honor. It is Canaan, or the desert. So it is in temporal matters.

And in spiritual things such crises also occur, and are as much more solemn as the interests they involve are more momentous. There are instances when the soul is awakened to attend to its spiritual concerns, and the proposal of heavenly good is made to us with such distinctness and particularity that a definite choice is forced upon us, and we are compelled to determine whether we will labor for the good "that endureth unto eternal life," or take up with what this world offers and can afford. The choice is inevitable. We cannot evade it. We cannot cheat ourselves into the belief that we are merely weighing the question, and postponing the decision to a more "convenient season." We may doubt whether the good that is proposed to us is so essential to our welfare as it is represented to be, or whether our enjoyment of its benefits is really so dependent upon the resolution we then come to.

Or we may timidly shrink from the requisite self-denial, and labor, and exposure, and cover up our cowardice under a pretty show of modesty and self-distrust, a doubting of our competency to fulfill the obligations and meet the temptations of a consistent course, and may even plead our fear of dishonoring God's cause by our weaknesses and failings. But, nevertheless, the choice is made, inevitably made, and there is too much reason to fear that it may be made finally and forever. The Canaan that seemed so near that we could see it with

our eyes recedes and becomes invisible, and the garish world again asserts the full influence of its tawdry and unsubstantial beauties. The blessed vision may never come back to us again. We may never again have eyes for heavenly things. Henceforward, we can only look upon "the things that are seen and are temporal." We "have our portion in this life;" and the sentence will be, "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things;" there is no rest remaining for thee. God may "swear in His wrath that we shall never enter into His rest," and "shut up his loving kindness in displeasure." Can any creature complain who has had one distinct offer of eternal good, and rejected it, if it is not extended to him again? And if no such decree goes forth, still, to a man whose heart, after being aroused to the claims of God, is again engrossed with temporal interests, the report of things unseen comes more and more faintly, and his conception and desire of eternal good grows more and more dreamy and unimpressive; and so what the world has to give absorbs and materializes his soul, and being of the world he perishes with the world.

And yet how transcendently excellent is the good thus offered to him in vain. The spies brought back the report that the land they had surveyed was a good land, a land of beauty and abundance, if there were difficulties in the way of its acquisition. They displayed before the eyes of the weary Israelites its charming and delicious fruits, its grapes of Eshcol, its pomegranates and figs. They told of its green valleys, and fertile fields, and grand and picturesque mountains, its river Jordan, its "Carmel by the sea," its fertile plain of Jezreel, its beauteous Shechem between the hills, its long coast bordering the sea and present-

ing many a haven for ships, its advantage for agriculture and for commerce, its rich cities built to their hand, one of them at least more ancient than that Zoan which they knew in Egypt, and all the wealth which its industrious inhabitants had heaped up to be a prey for them.

> "The limpid wells, the orchards green
> Left ready for the spoil,
> The household stores untouched, the roses bright
> Wreathed o'er the cottage walls in garlands of delight."

And the spies were unanimous in their account, though not in their counsel. And what earthly mind ventures to deny that heaven is good. Not only the brave Joshua and Caleb, but the whole twelve united in their description of Canaan as a land of surpassing charms and resources, well worthy of all the cost and toil that could be expended in its acquisition. And from all this good it was that they turned away to live and die in the wilderness, and rest under the shame and wretchedness of a complete and final exclusion.

But what is all this to that "land very far off" which is a land of promise to us, where the city of God, with gates of pearl and streets of gold, stands open continually that all may enter in who will; where "the river of life out of the Throne of God and the Lamb" goes more softly than any earthly "waters of Siloah;" where "the tree of life yields twelve manner of fruits" and is forever green; where "they have no need of a candle nor of the light of the sun" because "the Lord God giveth them light;" where "they hunger no more neither thirst any more," and all is joy and peace and unceasing praise. To turn one's back on all this good, because we see it only by faith,

and it does not obtrude itself upon our vision, and because we can attain to it only by energetic and persevering endeavors, and by "keeping under the body and bringing it into subjection," and leading a life of faith in the Son of God and devotion to God's glory, and take up with such poor and transitory things as this world can furnish. O this surely is folly with which Israel's rejection of Canaan can bear no comparison.

And what is left to us if we make this mad and fatal choice? What is this world but a wilderness, where there is nothing to meet the wants of the immortal soul; where in our aimless pilgrimage we circle round, and turn back upon our steps, and never reach a goal that can afford us solid rest and satisfaction; where the inward thought of those who are its devotees, a thought that grows stronger as life wears on, is that "the world can never give the bliss for which we sigh." Poor, poor portion of those whose aims rise no higher than the beggarly profits which a worldly life can give! Truly every such man has "hewed out to himself cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." And then when at last his "feet stumble on the dark mountains," "naked he must return to go as he came," and nought remains to him but the dark noisome grave, and an awful accounting with God.

But I am making no such choice. I have made none such. I never will make such an one. I am but standing in suspense, and shall certainly choose the good part in time to secure its benefits. The eleventh hour laborer had his penny. The malefactor on the cross was that day with Christ in Paradise. I am young. I am healthy. I am virtuous. I am thoughtful. I have hosts of good purposes in my mind. I shall by and by drift into the heavenward

path, and gain an entrance into the rest of God's people. This is all a delusion. The case does not admit of neutrality. "He that is not for Me is against Me." The choice is being made. You are making it hourly. "Behold I set before you life and good, death and evil; wherefore, choose life that both you and your seed may live."

XXI.

KORAH.

And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and their goods. — NUMBERS xvi. 31, 32.

THE doom of exclusion from Canaan, which fell upon the existing generation of Israelites in consequence of their cowardly assent to the unbelieving and pusillanimous report of the spies, was followed by a rash attempt to force their way in defiance of the divine decree. But it only served to show how weak and incompetent they were when God withdrew His help, and it was punished with a signal defeat. The Amalekites and Canaanites smote them and discomfited them. The temerity of desperation could not recover that which the timidity of unbelief had lost. Then quickly followed the rebellion of Korah.

There is an analogy between this case of Korah and that of King Uzziah in a later age, but it is an analogy with a difference. The one would break down the priesthood altogether, the other would infringe and overset that order which God has wisely established in the Church for the more profitable and effective discharge of its holy functions. Uzziah was a king, a man of high degree, and of power; but his offense in attempting to exercise the sacerdotal office was not on that account the less audacious, but in some respects

the more so, because his example was by reason of his station the more conspicuous and influential. The higher the man the worse the mischief if he is bad. And when a Levite was not content to be a Levite, but would fain be a priest, and even an high-priest, and to gratify his "vaulting ambition" would break down the whole priesthood to a common level, that he might rise upon its ruins, not by superiority of rank, but by personal boldness and energy, and draw unthinking men outside the pale of the priesthood to countenance and aid his disorder in furtherance of ambitious projects of their own, we see how a sacred office as little as an exalted station, can secure a man against the inward evils of pride and selfishness, and the rash and dangerous course of action to which their indulgence will certainly lead. Each case has its own particular lesson of instruction and warning; for though they are closely related, as springing from a common root, yet do they differ in the outgrowth, as the branches of the upas may with one quality grow into various forms and aspects.

The one has its parallel in modern times in that radical temper, which denies the divine quality of the ministry altogether, and makes the existence of men "who labor in the word and doctrine" but a human arrangement, a convenient instrumentality for teaching and enforcing Christian ideas; and the other, in that spirit, in the ministry itself which "despises dominion and speaks evil of dignities," and either ends in separation on schemes which disown its ancient and divine order, or work within the pale in continual restlessness, irregularity, and disobedience.

God was pleased under the old, as He has done under the present dispensation, to constitute the priest-

hood of His Church, in accordance with that principle of orderly arrangement which runs through all His ways, in a threefold order, with a regular distribution and gradation of powers from the lowest to the highest. The whole tribe of Levi was severed from the nation, and set apart for sacred uses and employments. In the secular wealth and work of the people they had no part; while yet a provision for their earthly wants, in grants of cities, lands, and tithes, was appointed to them, so ample as to enable them to "be without care," and "wait on the Lord without distraction," a provision poorly matched by any liberality which is commonly shown in the like regard under the freer and more spontaneous system of Christianity. Out of of this tribe the descendants of Aaron were selected to constitute the priesthood proper, by whom the sacrifices were to be offered, and the chief part of the ritual observances of the Law looked after; while to one alone in the tribe, the lineal descendant of Aaron through his eldest son Eleazar, according to the law of hereditary extraction, pertained a still higher office and dignity as the head of the national hierarchy, and chief over all the sacerdotal body, in place, authority, and honor.

But the wisdom of men does not quietly acquiesce in God's wisdom when it goes counter to the interests, impulses, and aspirations of self-love. "The unruly wills and affections of sinful men" quickly rebel, when those who think themselves equal to the highest place find themselves in a secondary position, and trammelled by the limitations which God's order imposes. Men are easily brought to doubt the divinity of a system that sets others over them, and assigns them only an inferior station, even though that be honorable

and good. The spirit of discontent and rebellion broke out even in the life of Aaron, and during the sojourn in the wilderness. Even thus early did the presumption of man dare to criticise and amend the institutions of God, and under the guise of a zeal for liberty and for right, the favorite pretext of ambition and selfishness, to break the order which God had established, and substitute devices of its own creation.

Korah was a Levite, but he aspired also to be a priest, and could not acquiesce in those limitations, which what he may have called the accident of birth and the arbitrary restraints of the Law, imposed upon him. And he easily drew to him as associates in his nefarious enterprise restless and dissatisfied men, not belonging to the priestly body, who joined him in his levelling schemes; men who as little liked the civil rule of Moses as he the ecclesiastical superiority of Aaron. A certain portion of the tribe of Reuben, under the leadership of two or three principal men of the tribe, joined the faction of Korah, and afforded him their countenance in the prosecution of his evil designs, hoping to achieve their own ambitious purposes at the same time in the recovery of their forefather's lost honors. When the ministers of God grow restive and uneasy under the laws that regulate and control their office, it is not strange if the lay people are "swift to hear" and learn the lesson of discontent, and in aiding them to throw off the yoke of godly discipline under which God has placed them, themselves grow irreverent and disorderly, and end in adopting principles and courses by which the sacred office is contemned and trampled under foot. If the clergyman despises the dominion of those who are rightfully "over him in the Lord," it will not be long before

others will deny his authority also, and in being his allies and the helpers of his unholy ambition, destroy the very dignity he is laboring to enhance.

"Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: and they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" The sedition was wide-spread, and threatened the most fatal consequences. Jealousy of power and place is contagious, and always finds an answering sentiment in many hearts. Broach it once among any body of men, and it will run "like sparks among the stubble." Equality and the lowering of eminence and distinction, and disregard of law, are popular doctrines, and easily clothe themselves in specious forms. It is alleged that all society is sacred; there is, there ought to be, no special sacredness in any in eminent place, which inferiors in office or men in private condition are bound to recognize and respect. Thus the bonds of social order in the Church, in the state, are loosened and destroyed. "All the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" We stand on the dignity of human nature, and the spiritual equality of all Christians: we can have no rulers, we will brook no superiors, we will obey no restrictions, — the spuri-

ous pleas of presumptuous self-will and ambition, in the state and in the Church, in all ages.

God, however, quickly interfered in this instance, to vindicate and protect His own appointments, and keep that sacred polity which His wisdom had provided for His Church from being trampled on and destroyed. I need not enter into the details of the solemn and awful story. It is familiar, for it is often read in the appointed lessons of the Church, and the narrative is too graphic and striking not to impress itself upon the memory. God brought the pretensions of Korah to a practical trial, and by the infliction of an awful judgment upon him while engaged in the act of offering incense in pursuance of his usurpation of the sacerdotal office, demonstrated His displeasure at the sin, and marked His sense of its magnitude and heinousness, as a permanent warning to the Church to the end of time. And, accordingly, many ages after, and under the new and better dispensation which has succeeded that for a violation of whose order Korah suffered, we find an Apostle speaking of some who in his day had "perished in the gainsaying of Core," plainly showing that Korah's sin is yet possible, is yet committed, and that now as of old, under the law of Christ as under the law of Moses, it is an offense against God, and one which He punishes, if not with equally public and signal demonstrations of His wrath, yet with those which, though they may elude the observation of unthinking men, are not less real, less effectual, or less severe.

"It came to pass," writes the historian, "that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that apper-

tained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them, fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also." Such was "the gainsaying of Core" and its punishment. Let us seek to extract wisdom from it.

What then is this "gainsaying of Core" to us? and what may we learn from it that is profitable for admonition and instruction in righteousness?

First, we learn the sacredness of the ministry, and of its divinely appointed order. God had separated a particular portion of the Israelitish nation from the rest and set them apart for the discharge of sacred functions. To them the performance of sacred offices exclusively belonged, and no other might intrude upon them without sin and danger. Fitter men there might be than these, in their own judgment, and in the opinion of their favorers; but fitness, real or presumed, could not take the place of a divine commission. A less fit man with that commission was a priest; a fitter, without it, was not a priest. No man could be a lawful priest but by being of Aaron's posterity, a priest by regular extraction and succession. And in the priesthood itself was a certain polity or constitution, a gradation of ranks, and an assignment and limitation of specific duties to its several grades, which was equally divine and sacred. The priesthood was not a promiscuous crowd, but an orderly host, whose various portions under subordinate leaders held together under one great head, were like an army with banners. Every man was to know his place and to keep it, and to do the duty of his place and none other, and not, on some specious plea of a higher fitness or a larger usefulness, intrude

on work which God had given to others. This was God's will, and to disregard it was to disobey God, and incurs His displeasure. How important the interest is, and how terrible the injury done by any infringement of it, the fate of Korah shows. Korah was a Levite, but he fain would be a priest. He could not acquiesce in his exclusion from higher functions to which he thought himself more competent than many whom he saw around him of Aaronic descent. To be a Levite was a great thing,— "Seemeth it a small thing unto you," asks Moses of the discontented and aspiring Levites, "that God hath separated you — to stand before the congregation to minister unto them." Doubtless, it was a great thing; but there were greater things, and nothing less than these would satisfy the proud Levite's ambitious heart; and to obtain them he would break down distinctions of God's devising, and place the whole priestly tribe on a level of official equality.

And there were men outside the tribe ready to applaud and uphold the movement. For if all Levites were to be on a footing, why not all Israelites, too? And if all Levites were equally priests, what need of any distinct order of priests? Why not let priestly offices be performed by any in the nation, who desired, who seemed fit, whom the people chose? So levelling in the priesthood tended to level the priesthood out of existence; and when Korah grew insolent to Aaron, Dathan and Abiram and On the son of Peleth, when they had used him for their own ends would grow insolent to Levi. And so, if Korah might say, What need of Aaron? other men would speedily say, What need of Korah? The invoking of lay help in aid of ministerial disorder is suicidal, and will end in the

pleasing doctrine that the minister is but the people's creature, and the people's tool. Where there is a Korah, there will always be a Dathan and an Abiram.

Now, my brethren, I need scarcely say that here are great principles, and these are applicable to the Church in all her periods and in all her forms. There is a ministry now in the Church, and it is there not because man made it, but God. "Let a man," says St. Paul, "so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." They hold their place, if they are really anything at all, by a *divine* commission. And they derive it in such way as God has ordained, according to that law of transmission which He has impressed upon it. It must respect that law itself, and all laws by which priestly functions are regulated, and others must respect them, or the mind of God is contravened, and "the end of the ministry towards the children of God, towards the Spouse and Body of Christ," will be unfulfilled. Men have not been content with that ministry as God made it. He made it in grades and ascending ranks. "Holy Scripture and ancient authors" testify to that with sufficient clearness. But men think that one rank, an equality of ranks, in its members is as good or better. Its own members have not liked to have superiors, and so have favored the doctrine. Korah and Aaron are to be on a footing. And then people begin to doubt whether either Korah and Aaron is a reality, or anything better than a tremendous sham, and a minister comes to be regarded as no more than a convenient conventional functionary to do certain religious acts which are recognized as needful or proper. And then the puppet of man's putting up man may treat with as much or as little respect as he pleases.

My brethren, has it not come to this? I do not wish to speak arrogantly or harshly: but is not this too true a picture of things as they are? And now, because the earth does not open and swallow us up, in an age when supernatural manifestations are withdrawn, shall we infer that God is not angry, and punishing us as really and severely in different ways?

Alas, the foundations on which moral and religious truth rests are shaking under our feet, and there are great clefts in which our highest interests are in danger of being engulfed, to warn us. There is error and unbelief on every side, and a sad contempt and disregard of sacred things. The ministry is regarded by many as an obsolete superstitition; and by great multitudes God's House is deserted and His Day treated with contempt. And lately discord and civil war have come rolling in upon us like a flood, and "men's hearts have been failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Without a ministry recognized as truly divine, there will never be religious stability, nor long, religious life and true Christian morals. And when these are gone, civil liberty and political order will not last long. And the first, the fatal step towards these dreadful losses is taken when that constitution of the ministry which Christ appointed is changed, and the sacred office begins to be looked upon as a thing which men may mould and alter to their convenience and their fancy.

But we must spare a little space for the broader lesson which this "gainsaying of Core" teaches us, namely, that in the social system, we all, ministers and laymen, especially ministers, have our place, which is appointed us of God, and our true wisdom and happiness lie in knowing what it is, and keeping in it. Korah had a place, and a very good place, but he did not like

it. He sought a better by unlawful means, and he lost all, and "left his name for a curse unto God's chosen." He forgot that God had assigned him his place, and that contentment in it was a part of his religious obedience, the service that God required at his hands. How full this world is of restless and uncomfortable aspirings! How many are there like Korah, in the ministry and outside of it, who do not like their places, and who never stop to consider Who it is that has made it, and put them into it. They see around them higher places, happier ones as they think; places that are certainly grander, that shine more, that seem to contain a greater plenitude of good, and to open larger sources of pleasure and enjoyment. They are discontented. They are envious. They get very little comfort from what they have by reason of their uneasy hankerings after what they have not.

Perhaps they go on all their lives distressed and unhappy because they are out of place, because their place, they think, ought to be higher up, because their light is hid under a bushel and they feel in themselves, as they suppose, clear symptoms of abilities and powers that would adorn more exalted positions, and fulfill mightier works. Or, it may be, that they violently break away from their place, and like Korah betake themselves to some engagements and undertakings more suitable to the high opinion they entertain of their capacities and deservings. Perhaps they proceed well; for sometimes men succeed well in bad things; but if they do, it is only to find that the old desire has followed them, and they are still as much below the standard of their desires as they were in their first condition. Contentment is not attained, and it would not be if they were to go on ascending the ladder of advancement till the pinnacle of earthly greatness

were reached. Alexander, when he had gained the world, wept that there was not another world to conquer.

But, more probably, the change is not a success. They do not find their new place good for them. They lack adaptation to it. It fits them badly; and they wish themselves back in a sphere which is better adapted to them, and which, if it be humbler, contains more to afford solid enjoyment and satisfaction to such as they. They see when it is too late, that they are not wiser than God; that it would have been better for them to have waited till God said to them, "Go up higher," if He ever did; and that it is the true wisdom of creatures to rely on God to "choose out their inheritance for them," and not to "lean to their own understanding."

The true antidote of this great evil is faith; faith in God and in His overruling Providence; faith in the divine order into which we find ourselves wrought, faith in the social economy under which we live as a divine structure and appointment; faith in our own assignment to that place and those relations in it, which, whatever we may think of them, are the mind of God concerning us, the work of that great fashioning Hand which "ordereth all things in heaven and earth," and which appoints to all inferior agents their place and their work, not in caprice, not in cruelty, not in partiality, not in a reckless disregard of their rights and their welfare, but in wisdom, in equity, in benevolence, for His glory and the greatest good of the greatest number of His creatures. Let this thought be impressed upon us, and our life will be happy, useful, dignified; Heaven begun on earth, the gate of Heaven hereafter.

XXII.

MERIBAH.

And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his hand smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. — NUMBERS XX. 11.

THE dreadful catastrophe of Korah's rebellion was pretty soon followed by an event less awful, to be sure, in some respects, but sadder to contemplate in others. Moses in it brought a blot upon his hitherto stainless life, which excluded him from Canaan, and must always remain a scar upon his memory. The inspired history, — and it is to be remembered that he himself is the historian, — with its customary faithfulness and impartiality, records it. So it always is. If David, the "man after God's own heart," sins, it is put down. If Moses, "the man of God," sins, it is put down; he puts it down himself. If Peter, the prince of the Apostles, sins, it is written in all the four Gospels. If Paul is imperfect and has an unseemly contest with Barnabas the account shows it. There is no attempt at concealment, and very little at extenuation or apology. The naked fact is stated, and men are left to think of it just as they choose. There is no other book like this. The fault in the case before us might seem to be very small, and the punishment inordinately severe. But God knows how to measure our offenses, and what punishment to mete out to them; and we, if

we consider, know that sins are not to be computed by their outward magnitude, and that the little sins of the great and good are of more account than greater transgressions of inferior persons, because of wider influence and more injurious example.

Upon the awful calamity that overwhelmed Korah and his company, the people, after their usual fashion, broke out into complaints and reproaches, and cried out in their dissatisfaction, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord." A plague ensued; but Aaron "took a censer and put incense thereon," and "stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed." And now, as a perpetual testimony of Aaron's right to the high-priesthood, and to warn all men against the repetition of Korah's sin, the rods of all the princes of the nation were brought together and laid up in the tabernacle; and Aaron's rod "budded, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds." And it was laid up before the ark for a perpetual testimony of the title he had to his office, and transmitted to his children.

But to Moses there was never much rest on earth. His life was "full of perturbations." Like Him of whom he was a figure, "he endured the contradictions of sinners against himself." For some reason, which is not specified, the miraculous supply of water which had followed them through their migration to this time was now intermitted, and "there was no water for the congregation." They were now in "the desert of Zin;" "and Miriam died there, and was buried there." The family ties of the aged man were breaking; his sister, who was older than he, had gone before him. But no judgments of God nor sight of human mortality could restrain the peevish impatience that had so long tried his soul. It is the old plaint repeated, the one

strain in which their murmuring ever finds vent: "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to bring us unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink." Moses was the meekest of men, a pattern of gentle forbearance and equanimity under trials and provocations that might excuse resentment and harshness. But now the hair was laid upon the camel's back that broke it, and his patience gave way at last under a perverseness that would yield neither to forbearance nor to severity. His conduct on the occasion was passionate and violent, and he yielded to an unseemly and unjustifiable burst of anger.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together; thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so shalt thou give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them: Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice; and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. This is that water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them." The name given to the place was Meribah, which signifies strife; because

there Israel strove with God, in fretting against His Providence. Hence the Psalmist speaks of the spot as "the waters of strife." "They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips."

Both the words and the actions of the much tried, much suffering man betrayed the heat of passion. Impatience and self-willed assumption of plenary power are the prominent features of his behavior. God had directed him to speak to the rock, and lay the divine command upon it to give forth water; but instead of that he spoke to the people, and in harsh and opprobrious terms, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" "And he smote the rock twice." A word was enough, but at the utmost a single softest touch of that marvellous wand would have sufficed, and was all that a reverent faith would have suggested. From the day of its promotion from the humble office of a shepherd's staff beneath the shadow of Horeb to be the honored instrument of God's power, in all the exigencies of his lengthened travel, it had never failed to evince God's faithfulness. But now it is roughly wielded, and brought down with force, and with a repetition of the stroke, as though the refractory rock was to be chastised into compliance, and forced to yield to the urgency of some power inherent in the rod, or in the hand that swayed it.

True reverence and faith are calm and modest and deliberate. Passion had clouded the mind of the great prophet, and shut God out of his thought, so that his work was for the time the work of a magician, and not the work of a true messenger of God. This is the unbelief with which he is charged; the want of

that clear and immediate reference to God and His power working in and by him, which heretofore had made his work so pure and holy.

Impatience, passion, unbelief, these evil tempers marred the work at Meribah. And though God, in compassion for His servant and in His pity to His people, crowned the work with success, so that the refreshing fluid again flowed in ample abundance to assuage their distress, yet would He mark His displeasure by depriving His servant of that which above all earthly blessings he craved, permission to cross the Jordan and go at the head of the nation whom he had rescued and shaped, into the possession which God had promised to them. The decree was inexorable; and no importunity could change it. In vain did he supplicate, "I pray Thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto Me of this matter."

The refusal was peremptory and final. A glimpse of the land from the heights of Pisgah was all that could be vouchsafed him. "Thou shalt not go over this Jordan." As when Esau had sold his birthright "for one morsel of meat," "he found no place for repentance though he sought it carefully with tears," so the rash act of a moment cut off Moses forever from the object of his highest earthly desire. The thought that had cheered him through all the weary watching and waiting of his pilgrimage in the desert, that had made labor light and deprivation endurable, must after all be abortive. On the soil once trodden by the feet of the great forefathers of the race, where the

ashes of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were sleeping in the cave of Machpelah, whither they were bearing the bones of Joseph to rest in Shechem; the land which Israel, during all their long sojourning in the country of the Pharaohs, had regarded as their home, which had made them always foreigners in the land of their birth, his feet must never press. One tantalizing glance, to assure him that Canaan was not a dream, that Canaan was a reality, that Canaan was goodly, that Canaan would be worth the toil and suffering it had cost, was all that he could have. That glance taken, his work was done; and not in that "glorious holy mountain" where God would "plant the tabernacles of His palace between the seas," but in Moabitish Nebo, on the farther side of Jordan, he must render back his soul to God.

There is something inexpressibly touching in this fact of the great lawgiver's life. We cannot withhold from him our sympathy. We cannot help wishing that it could have been otherwise. We cannot repress a feeling of regret and disappointment that the drama turns at its end to a tragedy. We stand in awe of God, and lay our hands upon our mouths; but the Apostle's thought struggles within us, "How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out." Yet it was a great thing to look into Canaan, if he might not touch it. And it is a great thing to us, since we cannot reach Paradise without dying, that we may see it by the eye of faith, and feel assured that it is separated from us only by a brief passage. God grant unto us, that when our time shall come, we may be able from some Pisgah to look across "the narrow sea," and quietly give ourselves up to Him, to be peaceably borne by His angels to "the Rest that remaineth for the people of God."

This painful incident in the life of Moses has its important lessons of comfort and of admonition to us all; and we will now endeavor to contemplate them. They are sufficiently obvious, and yet it will be useful to give them a separate and distinct consideration. They are these — to couch them in the phrase of Scripture — "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall:" "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves:" "A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid."

1st, then: There is here a lesson against presumption: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The incident in Moses' life before us supplies a very striking proof of the wisdom and necessity of this caution. Few men ever had better reason to think that they stood than Moses; yet he fell, and perhaps the secret of his fall lay in nothing so much as in that very thought. If there was ever on earth a man of imperturbable composure, it might seem to have been he. Few have been equally tried, and fewer have borne trial with equal patience. His natural temperament was one of remarkable placidity and calmness. It is recorded of him: "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." And in catechisms of Scripture characters, which we teach our children, meekness is ascribed to him as his characteristic quality. And surely, what is recorded of him abundantly justifies the encomium. He had borne provocations, many and various, with a truly wonderful equanimity. The wearing waywardness of his people, their stupidity, their dullness, their cowardliness, their ingratitude, their frequent rebellions against his wise and rightful rule, their vehement reproaches, their mistrust of his

motives, or his wisdom, or his fidelity, produced in him no disturbance of temper, availed not to shake his settled self-control.

And may it not be that the fixedness and singleness of purpose which consecrated his life, were in some good degree the secret of his imperturbable serenity, which made him like the rock amidst the surges, throwing them aside in spray with a grand disdain, or, like the racer, too intent upon his goal to heed or even hear the unfriendly comments with which enemies or weak-hearted friends criticise his progress? Of some men it may be said that they cannot find time to be angry; their engrossment in the one thing of their lives is too complete to allow them to be sensible of assaults upon it; they are too bent on their object to spare any power to be expended in resentful thoughts or retaliatory words; they are calm as the whirlpool is calm by the intense concentration of its circling waters. Surely this might well be true of Moses, so entire was his devotion to the one purpose of his life. And he was now old, advanced to the outer edge of his life on earth. Habit had done all it could to fasten what disposition and self-oblivion had fostered. Had it not engendered some touch of self-confidence and security? And was he not left to fall into this unseemly ebullition of rage to cure the evil, and teach him that where he thought himself safest, he was dreadfully insecure? So it was with Hezekiah, when, "in the business of the princes of the king of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that He might know all that was in his heart." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" "He that trusteth

in his own heart is a fool." Let none of us think that we are not liable to sin even in ways most alien to our disposition and habits, if God leaves us to ourselves. "Happy is the man that feareth alway." "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

Again, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." We have here a lesson of dependence. The text quoted gives us a catch-word here — *Pray.* The tendency of a confirmed habit of well-doing in some direction, no doubt, is to lessen our sense of dependence on God for its maintenance, our need of continual succors of grace in order to secure our perseverance. We are too apt to begin to think that the good habit is too firmly fixed, too much ingrained into the texture of our practice, to yield to the power of temptation, and that it will now take care of itself. Though it was once the gift of God, it is now so domesticated in us, so thoroughly at home in our lives, that it is become part of ourselves, and will never give way till we give way. And in a certain sense this conviction is warrantable. For surely, it were hard to deny to men the comfort of thinking that continuance in well-doing is a measurable security against the opposite evil-doing, and that persistence in any line of godly discipline does make our virtues strong, and prepare them the better to resist the strain which the influence of the world and the evil that is in it exert to overcome their integrity. God forbid that we should teach that the advanced Christian is as liable to fall into sin as the babe in Christ. That were poor consolation, truly, to those who are aiming to "live godly in Christ Jesus."

But then, this maturity of goodness is never in this

life a thing that will take care of itself, never grows to be independent of the source whence it first proceeded. Begun in God, it is continued and ended in God. Ever must the Christian say, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me," and consider that in the life of grace, as truly as in his physical life, he lives upon daily supplies. To old age the lesson of his catechism needs to be repeated to him, "Thou art not able to do these things of thyself, nor to walk in the commandments of God, and to serve Him, without His special grace; which thou must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer."

The security against our falling into some offense, by which the consistency of our Christian life will be sadly marred, and the enemies of the Lord emboldened to blaspheme His Name, is to be found in the deep, settled, practical conviction, that good is not and never can be so established in us that it will stand in its own power, or live upon its own resources; and that no form of evil is ever so thoroughly eradicated, even that which gives no present sign of vitality or action in our soul, that it may not at any time spring forth from its covert and make us its prey; and that thus in every moment of our lives and to our latest breath, we are saved by grace, and ought to have always living within us and ready to spring forth on any and every emergency, the spirit of the prayer, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me," "Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my Salvation." So the Apostle, after telling men to take to themselves the whole armor of God, and describing what that armor shall be, adds, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto." To the same end are his exhortations to "pray without ceasing," to "continue in prayer," and that "men pray

everywhere." And another Apostle's counsel is wholly accordant with this, where he advises men, "Praying in the Holy Ghost, to keep themselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

And once more, there is here a lesson of our conspicuousness. "A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." The conspicuousness of a man adds greatly to the influence of his conduct, whether for good or for evil. And this unavoidable augmentation of influence is a vast aggravation of the mischiefs of evil-doing, and to no small extent also of its guilt; since the scene of this conspicuousness and of the consequences that result from it ought to operate as a special guard upon the man, and make him habitually mindful that his faults cannot be common faults, nor his criminality common criminality. To disregard this special restraint, and carelessly let temptation get the mastery over him, is thus enough to make what would be a trifling peccadillo in another man a grave offense in him. And the case is all the worse, if the conspicuousness is a spiritual conspicuousness, an eminence in the profession and practice of godliness. And here the area of the conspicuousness greatly widens itself; because such a profession gives a man an eminence, if he has none on any other account.

For religion is, alas, in what are called Christian communities even, the mark of a minority, an exceptional thing, if you use the term in the stricter and graver sense. So that the person who, by any act of his, consents to be known among men as a religious man, does by that act make himself observable, climbs up upon an eminence, and exposes himself to the particular notice and criticism of men around him; an

inevitable elevation, which no "humbleness of mind," or "meekness of wisdom," can avoid. Hence our Saviour's words to His disciples in old time, "Ye are a city set on an hill," were addressed to them simply as Christians, and not as holding some distinguished place that raised them above the ordinary level of Christians. Every Christian who consents to be taken as one who is, or is striving to be, what that "worthy name" properly implies, becomes a noticeable man, a man who invites the gaze of the world, and is sure to secure it. And at once his faults and falls assume a new character. The things that in him were not remarkable before are remarkable now; the things that have not been incongruous are incongruous. And as a single spot on some soiled surface is of little account, because it is in keeping with all around it, but if that surface be cleansed and brightened, the spot becomes painfully plain and offensive; so they who "walk not after the course of this world," and say because they cannot help it, "We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness," ought always to remember what a very altered aspect and estimation their misdoings have acquired by this assumption.

And if to this common liability of Christians, there be added that which arises from some prominent position in the Christian body, such as makes the man a leader, a captain, a prince in Israel, such as may come from office, or special intelligence, or commanding intellect, or the possession of wealth, the importance of the man's conduct is proportionally enhanced; his faults are so much the more mischievous, and his guilt in suffering himself to be betrayed into them very much increased. His little sin is great, because his own greatness multiplies itself in all that pertains to

him, and renders it quite impossible for him to do anything insignificant in its bearing upon the service of God and the reputation of His cause.

Here, then, while we have a solution of what we might heartily be disposed to account the undue severity of Moses' punishment, we have a lesson for ourselves which we cannot take home to ourselves too seriously, or bear in mind and practice upon too carefully. Let none of us say that his station is so obscure and his sphere of action so contracted that his "conversation in the world" is without influence. There is around us all a circle that notices us, and that takes its ideas of Christianity from us, if we profess to be disciples, that will find in our blemishes a stumbling-block in their way, or an excuse for their skepticism or neglect. "Ye are the light of the world: a city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

XXIII.

BALAAM.

And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish forever. And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place: and Balak also went his way. — NUMBERS xxiv. 24, 25.

IN the story of Balaam we have the grandest of the episodes in the Mosaic narrative. There is none so instinct with poetic power, that so wakes the soul to lofty thoughts and solemn musings. Well and beautifully has Mr. Keble given them utterance: —

"O for a sculptor's hand,
That thou might'st take thy stand,
Thy wild hair floating on the eastern breeze,
Thy tranced yet open gaze
Fix'd on the desert haze,
As one who deep in heaven some airy pageant sees.

"In outline dim and vast
Their fearful shadows cast
The giant forms of empires on their way
To ruin: one by one
They tower and they are gone;
Yet in the prophet's soul the dreams of avarice stay.

"No sun or star so bright
In all the world of light
That they should draw to Heaven his downward eye:
He hears th' Almighty's word,
He sees the angel's sword,
Yet low upon the earth his heart and treasure lie.

. . . . . .

"He watched, till morning's ray
On lake and meadow lay,

And willow-shaded streams, that silent sweep
Around the bannered lines,
Where, by their several signs,
The desert-wearied tribes in sight of Canaan sleep.

"He watched, till knowledge came
Upon his soul like flame,
Not of those magic fires at random caught;
But true prophetic light
Flashed o'er him, high and bright,
Flashed once, and died away, and left his darkened thought.

"And can he choose but fear,
Who feels his God so near,
That when he fain would curse, his powerless tongue
In blessing only moves?
Alas! the world he loves
Too close around his heart her tangling veil hath flung."

But for a few moments, first, the line of narrative that connects Balaam with Meribah, where we last left Moses and the people, must claim our attention.

The Israelites had now reached the frontier of Edom, having in their winding course again drawn near the Red Sea, on which the possessions of Esau's posterity bordered. This they must not assail; because God had given to Esau Mount Seir to possess it. A peaceable passage through the country being refused them, Israel turned away, and "the congregation journeyed from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor." Here Aaron was "gathered to his people," and the office of high-priest devolved upon his son Eleazar. Moses now was the only one left of the family of Amram, and, stripped of those whose company and counsel had cheered and supported him in his pilgrimage, was to tread its few remaining steps alone.

Winding around Edom to avoid that forbidden land, they pass the lower end of the Dead Sea, and approach the land of Moab on the east of the Jordan. The peo-

ple again murmur, and are "much discouraged because of the way," "in wandering mazes lost," and in their weary marches coming not near their goal. "Fiery serpents," serpents whose bite was venomous and inflammatory, were sent, and a serpent of brass, set upon a pole, was appointed to be the antidote and cure to all who looked upon it — image of Himself "lifted up to draw all men unto Him," as our Saviour declares.

They now approach the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, and on asking leave to pass through it are refused. And when he assaulted them, they "smote him with the edge of the sword and possessed his land." The heathen possessors of the country were becoming alarmed at the presence of so multitudinous a host in their midst, and prepared to resist their progress. Adjoining their new possessions on the north lay the possessions of Og the king of Bashan, a wondrous region whose giant cities even now, tenantless but in their cyclopean strength and massiveness almost untouched by the finger of decay, arrest and fix the gaze of the astonished visitor. When Og also came out against them he was quickly overcome, and his kingdom added to their newly acquired possessions in the land of Sihon. These earliest conquests became afterwards by their own request the territories of the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and of half the tribe of Manasseh, outside of Palestine proper, in the country east of Jordan.

They now moved further south and "pitched in the plains of Moab" in the territories of the descendants of one of the sons of Lot; "and Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time." The fate of the neighboring kingdoms aroused his apprehensions; and as arms had proved ineffectual for them, he

thought to avail himself of the more potent instrumentality of supernatural powers.

Away off on the banks of the Euphrates, among the children of the East, dwelt a man the fame of whose unearthly powers had spread through all the surrounding regions, a great seer whose spells and incantations were regarded as irresistible, — "I wot," says Balak in his message to him, "that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." To him, in conjunction with "the elders of Midian" (a different portion of that people from that with which Moses had intermarried), he sent an honorable embassage to invoke his presence and his help.

And now the great wizard of the East feels himself seized upon and subsidized by divine power with a might greater than he had before known, though it may have been a power which he had before sought or feigned to consult. God would make him a true prophet, and through his unwilling soul publish oracles that should not only solve the great problem near at hand, but pour their light along the lengthened series of the coming ages. He feels a Hand laid upon him that constrains him to hold his own will in abeyance, and submit to the control of a Will whose behests are different from his and far mightier. The king of Moab wants his help against a company that threatened to lick up all that were round about him "as the ox licketh up the grass of the field:" but God will not let him go, and he refuses with a suppressed reluctance that wore the appearance of a reverent submission. But now the king's messengers come again, "more, and more honorable." And Balaam, grudging to forfeit the glittering bribe the king holds out to him, while he covers up his greedy longing under a show of obe-

dience, commits the fatal error of opening again a question which God had already determined. And so God in wrath lets him have his way, a form of punishment common in His Providence, and gives him permission to go, limiting him strictly in the discharge of his mission to the instructions that He would give him.

And so "Balaam the son of Beor that loved the wages of unrighteousness," the great Mesopotamian seer, follows the Moabitish envoys to their own land. But that he might not mistake permission for approval, and might even now have opportunity to retreat from an errand to which nothing but avarice drew him, "the Angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him." And when the ass on which he rode, more discerning than her rider, obeyed the check and was beaten, God caused articulate sounds to issue from the injured animal, and "the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet." Still God gives him his option to go on if he will, under the same restriction; and the dream of avarice, the hope of rich recompenses, again draws him forward.

Balak comes to meet him at the border of his dominion, and there, in the high places of Baal, with seven altars and seven sacrificial fires sending up their spires of flame, he seeks the inspiration that is to enable him to fulfill his foul design. The voice comes and breathes upon his lips, the Spirit moves upon him as the winds play among the strings of an Æolian harp, and a blessing comes forth and not a curse on Israel. And now the disappointed king, balked in his first endeavor, takes him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah; and again the seven altars rise and the seven sacrifices flame, but the blessing again bursts from his involuntary lips and with added emphasis and energy, in beauteous rhythm and picturesque poetry.

And now the discouraged king is half-fain to have him desist; but one more trial shall be made of the desperate endeavor. He leads him now to the "top of Peor that looketh towards Jeshimon," and with new altars and new victims seeks to appease the angry divinities; but all in vain. Again, the unwelcome response bursts forth: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel." "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." And now the helpless prophet gives himself up to a power in which his own mind and volition are so strangely overborne, and pours forth in glowing words the visions that come crowding on his illuminated eyes. He sees "the Star that shall come out of Jacob, and the Sceptre that shall rise out of Israel," even Christ, at once the Light and the Ruler of men, before whose puissant sway Moab and Edom and all the children of Sheth, the children, that is, of tumult, all that "rage together against the Lord and against His Christ," shall vanish away, till the kingdoms of this world own and obey His power. Amalek perishes forever; the Kenite wastes till Assyria carries him away captive. And then, as the mighty scene unrolls itself before him, he exclaims "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!" And finally, with one deeper gaze into the dread secrets of futurity, he sees the Macedonian empire rise, and Europe beginning to assert its supremacy in human things; and then the wrath of God expires, and the harp is still forever. "And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish forever. And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place: and Balak also went his way."

Yet the wretched man's transient illumination had

not renewed his heart, nor changed the current of his life. He seduced Israel into abominable lewdness when he was not permitted to curse them, and brought upon them God's anger, and the infliction of a destructive plague. And at last, in the conquest of Canaan by Joshua, it is briefly written, "Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword."

There are few things more magnificent in Scripture or anywhere else. Even the Dean of Westminster is so impressed in the contemplation that he forgets himself and is surprised into orthodoxy: "As he gazed, the vision became wider and wider still. He saw a time when a new tempest would break over all these countries alike, from the remote east — from Asshur, from his own native land of Assyria. 'Asshur shall carry thee away captive.' But at that word another scene opened before him, and a cry of horror burst from his lips: 'Alas! who shall live when God doeth this!' 'For ships shall come from the coast of Chittim,' — from the island of Cyprus, which, as the only one visible from the heights of Palestine, was the one familiar link with the western world — 'and shall crush Asshur, and shall crush Eber,' the people beyond the Euphrates, 'and he also shall perish forever.'

"So it came to pass, when the ships of Cyprus, of Greece, of Europe, then just seen in the horizon of human hopes and fears, did at last under the great Macedonian conqueror, turn the tide of Eastern invasion backwards; and Asshur and Babylon, Assyria, and Chaldea, and Persia, no less than the wild hordes of the desert, 'perished forever' from the earth." "Here too," he adds, "is exhibited in its most striking form the irresistible force of the prophetic impulse overpowering the baser spirit of the individual man."

"The divine message struggling within him, is delivered in spite of his own sordid resistance."

Adopting the Dean's exposition in the main, let us consider the prophecy briefly. Chittim, then, is Cyprus; but as navigation in the days of Moses was yet in its infancy, and little was known of the countries that lay west of Canaan down the Mediterranean Sea, its use in Scripture is much more extensive. "The isles of Chittim" were the pieces of coast descried at a distance or visited by navigators, considered as insular though oftentimes constituting parts of the main-land. Hence the term stands for Greece, or, more comprehensively still, for Europe at large. An invasion of the East by a European fleet is evidently the thing foretold. In the First Book of Chronicles, Kittim is called one of the sons of Javan, who was himself the son of Japhet, the head of the European branches of the human family, and is associated with Elishah, Tarshish, and Dodanim, all races of men dwelling on the coasts of the Mediterranean. The Vulgate version, with its English translation in the Church of Rome, makes Chittim Italy. Countries lying west across the water and inhabited by Japhet's descendants are vaguely described by this name.

The prophecy points forward to a time when from these then little known regions, a hostile fleet should invade the lands of Shem, and bring upon them sore affliction. "Ships shall come from Chittim and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and his latter end shall be that he perish forever." Asshur is Assyria, and Eber the Hebrew race, and not, as Dean Stanley thinks, the people beyond the Euphrates. Some great Western power was in a distant age to conquer Assyria and the country of the Hebrews, and bring upon

them terrible calamities. And the prophecy met its wonderful fulfillment when the Macedonian Alexander overran the proud seats of Babylonian, Assyrian, and Persian power, and made them feel the pressure of his iron yoke; and when Palestine, on which the Hebrews were in Balaam's day looking with wishful eyes, after being their possession through ages, should bow to his all-grasping power, and under one of the lines of his successors, in the person of Antiochus Epiphanes, endure severe affliction in persecutions and oppressions.

Nor, when we consider the comprehensive character of prophecy, need we hesitate to suppose that the words of Balaam comprise that whole series of invasions and conquests by which Rome, following in the track of Alexander and his successors, brought the East under its spreading power, and first Pompey, and still later Vespasian and Titus, subdued the Hebrew people, bringing upon it "affliction such as was not from the beginning of the creation that God created unto this time, neither shall be," and left Jerusalem to be "trodden down by the Gentiles till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." "Westward the course of empire takes its way," forsaking its old seats where Nimrod "began to be a mighty one in the earth," for Greece and Rome and Britain, till now in our own broad country the West confronts the East; and when it has thus girdled the earth it may be the end is near, and soon "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever." The Romish version translates our whole verse thus, and not badly though freely: "They shall come in galleys from Italy, they shall overcome the Assyrians, they shall waste the Hebrews, and at the last they themselves also shall

perish." Alexander and the dynasties that sprang from him are gone; Rome and her empire have perished; the conqueror and the conquered sleep together "to dull oblivion a prey." The Hebrew alone remains, in his strange preservation a more conspicuous sign of God's wrath than the peoples that are scattered "as the dust of the summer threshing floors." "God is the King of all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding."

Now I have just two things to say about the subject that has been before us, and I will cease.

See here a striking proof of the divine character of prophecy. There are some that contend that prophecy is but human foreknowledge in minds of peculiar reach and compass, gathering auguries of the future from signs of its approach in existing symptoms and tendencies. But how does this flippant formula of rationalistic doubt tally with the case before us? What mortal foresight saw in the dusky shore, dimly seen in the distance across the waters, and in countries more rumored of than known and esteemed the homes of barbarism, the fleets of Alexander pouring themselves out upon the plains of Asia, and the great empire of the Chaldeans crumbling and falling before its force, and even the chosen people of God ground beneath its oppressive tyranny? To attribute such prevision to Nature is to make Nature's miracles greater than God's. Rather will the truly wise man bow to the severe logic of facts, and in the wondrous progeny of events that have come forth from the womb of this pregnant oracle, recognize the Finger of God. The pretexts by which men "professing themselves wise" endeavor to evacuate the prophetic Scriptures of their divine element are vain, and end in conclusions far

more untenable and incredible than those they seek to set aside. The credulity of unbelief is marvellous, and he that shall undertake to set aside the divinity of the Scriptures shall be compelled to admit absurdities with which nothing in the domain of faith can compare. Let us rather admit that "God in sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past by the prophets," and rejoice that "we have a more sure word of prophecy whereunto we do well to take heed as to a light shining in a dark place." And let us make that Book which contains these sayings of God, the "man of our counsel," and walking by the light that it affords, in cheerful courage and joyful hope, so pass through things temporal as finally not to lose the things eternal.

And the second thing to be said is, that illumination, knowledge, and a commission either temporary or permanent to publish it, are not religion or salvation. Alas, this gifted prophet "loved the wages of unrighteousness." The hire of the magical impositions that he would have practiced, if God had permitted him, glittered charmingly in his eyes. A slave, he did in God's service only what irresistible might compelled him to do. His words were with Israel, but his heart was with Moab. The altar fires he kindled in seeming homage to Balak's worship of Baal were the tribute of his venality, while his lips poured forth sentiments of honor to the God of Israel. He saw the truth as his enlightened soul drank in the revelations of which he was made the channel, but he neither loved nor obeyed it. The light he had was the cold light of the understanding without warmth to soften or purify his life. And so when the grand visions faded away, they left him as they found him, sordid, mercenary, and selfish,

a charlatan, whose supernatural powers from whatever quarter derived, were merely the craft by which he had his wealth, an article of traffic and of gain. And he showed his bitter enmity to the God that had deprived him of his coveted emolument by enticing His people into foul sin and dying with weapons of opposition in his hands.

It is a sad picture indeed. But let us not fail to gather from it useful instruction. It tells us plainly that office and endowments, together or separate, are not goodness or salvation, neither do they necessarily bring them in their train. There were to be those, our Saviour tells us, who should "prophesy in His Name" and "eat and drink in His presence," of whom at the last He would say, "I never knew you." And St. Paul informs us that "though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, we are but sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." We may have the gift of fluent and beautiful speech, and use it freely upon divine themes as Balaam did, and be lost. We may sigh forth as he did, when we mentally perceive the exceeding excellence of a good man's hope, "Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his," and yet die in our sins and our end be but an infinite wretchedness. We may be preachers of righteousness, and not righteous; knowing upholders of a creed, and not believers; clear perceivers of spiritual principles, and yet "carnal, sold under sin." Let us scrutinize and catechize our religious pretensions. Let us force them to show their credentials and point out on them the signature of God. We may be admired, courted, flattered, commended as shining disciples, and "the things that are approved of men be abomination in the sight of God." Let us

look into our hearts and not deceive ourselves, because a deceit here is unspeakably awful.

Is God, then, the object of our love, fealty, devotion, worship, service? Is Christ, then, the object of our trust, gratitude, imitation, whom we serve as men who are bought with a price, and are not their own but His? Is the Holy Spirit, then, drawn down into our souls by earnest and habitual prayer, and making us by His presence temples consecrated to His glory? O then, we may know little, and have little of the gift of utterance, and do no mighty works, but we are Christ's and we shall be with Him where He is and behold His glory.

XXIV.

THE PROPHECY.

Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? — DEUTERONOMY xxix. 24.

THE city of Shechem, the modern Nablous, in which the remnant of the Samaritan race yet dwell, lies between two parallel ridges that stretch along on either side of it like a wall. The spot is among the loveliest in Palestine, and is noted in its history. Here Jacob dwelt after his return from Padan-aram. Here Joseph's bones were laid "in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Emmor, the father of Sychem." From a crag of the neighboring mountains Jotham here poured forth his bitter parable against Abimelech. Here, at Jacob's well, our Lord sat weary with His journey, and told "a woman of the city" of the "well of water that springeth up unto eternal life." Here in earlier times, the mongrel Samaritans built their temple on Gerizim in imitation and rivalry of the House of God in Jerusalem, and here their posterity, in our Saviour's day, in His own words, "worshipped they knew not what." The spot is nearly in the centre of the country, of remarkable fertility and beauty, and full of historic interest. From the summits of these opposite ranges, Moses now ordered the blessing and the curse to be poured out in words which he provided for the purpose, when Israel should have

gained possession of the land, words which, in the case of the curse, at least, for their prophetic force and the abundance of horrible images which they heap together, cannot be denied a place in our survey of the great leader's life.

That life was now drawing near its close. The forty years of wandering had almost reached their end. The people that came out of Egypt with him had fallen in the wilderness; only the faithful Joshua and Caleb remained. Miriam and Aaron were no more. A new generation stood around him, tough sons of the desert, who either knew nothing of Egypt, or only as it lingered in their minds in the faint memories of early childhood. From the land of Moab he could look across the Jordan, and see the hills and valleys of the country beyond. He was very aged, and the time of his departure was at hand. Still he stood erect and dauntless, "his eye not dim nor his natural force abated." It was now that he gave forth those parting counsels which are embodied in the Book of Deuteronomy, containing a review of the past, repetitions and modifications of legal enactments, fervent appeals, earnest exhortations, solemn warnings. It is now that the prophetic spirit in its more precise sense of prediction comes out in him most forcibly, and he tells the people in graphic language what things shall befall them in the latter days.

To give these solemn warnings greater force and efficacy, Moses commanded the heads of people, when they should have gained an entrance into Canaan, to gather the whole nation together at Shechem, and there from the opposite sides of the valley, in the ascent of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, to proclaim audibly the solemn judgments of God on their ways,

according as they should be good or evil. For this purpose the nation should be divided into two companies of six tribes each, one on the slopes of Gerizim and one on the slopes of Ebal, to testify respectively to God's love and justice, His goodness and severity; and as the enumeration of acts of obedience and acts of transgression should proceed, at each clause in the catalogue of evil works, all the people were to say, Amen. To their assent to the blessings on the good, no audible expression seemed necessary, for the approval of blessings needs no enforcement.

This direction given, the burdened heart of the prophet looking down the vista of ages, and seeing with too clear a vision the sad departure from the line of duty and obedience which would characterize their future history, pours forth his soul in a strain of menace and objurgation which for energy and power of expression, and the accumulation of images of horror and destruction, has not perhaps its parallel in human speech, and of which the history and condition of the people in subsequent times has become but too accurate a transcript and realization. If Josephus' account of the siege and conquest of Jerusalem exceeds all other histories in the horrors it describes, so does Moses' prophecy of them outdo all other forebodings of terrible things. The awful reality is only matched by the awful prediction.

The injunction was faithfully fulfilled by Joshua, when in the course of his victories he reached the appointed place. There, in the "Paradise of the Holy Land," in what Dr. Robinson calls a "scene of fairy enchantment," the dread solemnity was kept. The people were ranged in two parties of six tribes each, along the ascent of the two mountains, while the ark

rested in the centre of the valley with the attendant priests, and Joshua spoke the solemn words in their hearing. "All Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side of the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, as well the stranger as he that was born among them, half of them over against Mount Gerizim and half of them over against Mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. And afterward he read all the words of the Law, the blessings and cursings according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones and the strangers that were conversant among them."

To the prophetic import of this remarkable oracle as fulfilled in the history and condition of the chosen people, I shall direct your attention, taking in connection with it, in some degree, "the song which (soon after) Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of the children of Israel," to be learned and sung by them, which is, in its voice of mingled promise and warning, akin to, and as it were the echo of the prophecy. A minute and particular examination of the wonderful oracle is impossible. Some heads of profitable reflection deduced from it are all we have time to consider. It foretells with a wonderful exactness and a thrilling eloquence the conduct and fate of God's people, and affords us in their story a striking evidence of the truth of God's Word, the evil of sin, and the ruinous consequences of an obstinate persistence in a course of transgression.

Look, first, at the intensity of the sufferings which it denounces upon the Jewish race. The prophet seems to labor under the weight of the theme, and strives to give it adequate expression as though it were beyond his power. For this purpose, he heaps together particulars, and gathers from all parts of nature and all departments of human life materials to fill up the dreadful picture. The images of horror seem to come trooping to him from every quarter to add their contribution to the grand sum of misery. And his language in giving utterance to his horrible conceptions acquires a vividness and momentum that match its dreadful subject. There is scarcely anything that could go to heighten human anguish bodily and mental that is not thrown into the frightful conglomeration, to make up such an assemblage of miseries as was hardly ever elsewhere known or imagined. Dante's pictures are terrific, but they are dispersed and distributed into portions, and every man has his own torment, from which other sufferers are exempt. But Moses concentrates his, and pours them all in one terrible mixture on the same devoted head. War, pestilence, and famine in their extremest terrors combine to swell the bitter grief, until they rise to those intolerable anguishes in which the bonds of society are dissolved, human sympathies are quenched, natural affection obliterated, and society transformed into a herd of ravening wolves, preying on one another without conscience and without pity. And this horrid state of things is to be without respite or intermission, affording no moment of rest or relief; so that men are driven to madness, and rave with the frantic incoherence of despair. "The tender and delicate woman which would not adventure to set her foot upon the ground for delicateness

and tenderness," grows savage, and glares upon her infant offspring with cannibal ferocity, and at last "she eats them secretly in the siege and straitness." "The Lord," he predicts, "shall smite thee with madness and blindness and astonishment of heart." "And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life. In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see." "So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the Lord hath laid upon it; and that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger, and in His wrath; even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger?"

And now, if we turn to the page of history, we find the correspondence exact to a wonderful degree. No more revolting picture of human misery, and of the demoralization and unhumanizing effect of extreme distress is anywhere to be found in the annals of the world than that which is exhibited in the last days of Jerusalem as the accounts of it have come down to us. The characteristic firmness in holding out after all hope of relief was gone, and the frantic desperation which trampled every tie and obligation under foot,

joined with the horrors of fire, of disease, and starvation, and the shocking and disgusting expedients to which necessity drove the people for the mitigation of their distress, show a scene such as Moses with his prophetic eye must have descried when he foretold the nation's doom. What in the prophecy might have seemed antecedently impossible, the faithful record of history has shown to be possible, because actual. We can hardly doubt that the Lord Jesus had this prophecy of Moses in His mind, and epitomized it, when He said that "there should be in those days affliction such as was not from the beginning of the creation." Harrowing tragedies this world has seen many, but none like Jerusalem's fall. The invasion of Nebuchadnezzar brought with it such sorrows, that Daniel says, "Under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem." And if we look upon the history of the nation since it was driven out by the Romans, we shall find in it the record of unparalleled woes, such as nothing but a charmed life could have survived. Despised, persecuted, and proscribed, the prey of cupidity and bigotry, robbed, tormented, and trodden under foot, it stands the miracle of history, the seal of that Gospel which it so obstinately refuses. A miraculous nation truly, unparalleled in suffering, and unparalleled in endurance, the very burning bush their great lawgiver saw at Horeb: —

> "Caught from that blaze by wrath divine,
> Lost branches of the once loved vine,
> Now withered, spent, and sere,
> See Israel's sons, like glowing brands,
> Tost wildly o'er a thousand lands
> For twice a thousand year.
>
> "Salted with fire, they seem to show
> How spirits lost in endless woe
> May undecaying live."

Look, next, at their dispersion, almost as wonderful as their miseries. This, too, Moses explicitly foretells: "And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there shalt thou serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone." This last prediction does not necessarily denote that they would themselves become idolaters, for the Jews, amidst all their trials since the Babylonish captivity, have always adhered firmly to the theism of their race, but that they should be servants of those who were idolaters, the slaves of heathens; though it may seem to have had a literal fulfillment in the case of the lost tribes. "And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot find rest; but there the Lord shall give thee a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind." And so again in the song: "And the Lord rooted them out of the land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day."

How true this is in the case of this extraordinary people we need but open our eyes upon the world, to see. Alone of peoples that inhabit the earth, foreigners everywhere, having no country that they call their own, and dwelling in all countries as a distinct element in their society, nay, always a society that adheres to general society only by a kind of parasitical life, sucking strength from its substance without assimilating to its character, it is a sort of misletoe, that drapes the branches of trees, and lives upon their sap, but sends no roots into the earth to draw from the soil a life of its own. And everywhere where men dwell does this intrusive life extend, accommodating itself with a

strange facility to all forms of living and all grades of culture; in all places at home and yet not at home; finding for itself an abode wherever it chances to pause, and yet never forgetting that its true domicile is a far-off country that is "trodden down by the Gentiles."

It is noticeable that the Jew rarely becomes an owner or cultivator of land, but lives with his staff in his hand, ready to depart, as his forefathers did on the eve of their flight from Egypt. His thrift is in money and moveable wealth that can easily change place with its master. And his condition through many dreary ages was everywhere one of annoyance, insecurity, and subjection to every species of ignominy and oppression. And if now more liberal ideas have meliorated his condition, and admitted him into the common brotherhood of mankind, still is he regarded with a certain instinctive repugnance and dislike, which keeps him aloof from men, and men aloof from him. Surely, his great lawgiver's prediction is fulfilled.

And now, finally, look at his preservation. I mean his preservation as a Jew. Every race is in a sense preserved. None has been extinguished. But many have merged their being in the common mass of humanity, and are no longer distinguishable as a peculiar people. Most modern nations are compound. Many rills run in the current of their blood. Not so the Jew. He is simply a Jew, and as purely such as were his ancestors when they came up out of Egypt. His blood has refused all admixture with foreign elements. He intermarries with no Gentile. His religion is what it was when his fathers worshipped in the synagogues of Palestine. He reads the same Scriptures, he recites the same prayers, he looks as of old for a Mes-

siah. His physiognomy everywhere tells the tale of his lineage.

And yet never was a people so unfavorably situated for the preservation of its identity. They did not go out in colonies to any considerable extent. Units they have been, floating like waifs and strays upon the great ocean of human society. Yet wherever he strays, there is the Jew, unabsorbed, unamalgamated, unmistakably a Jew. National bounds hedge in nations and with some admixtures preserve substantially national marks and qualities. But this is a nation that has no such protection, without a country, without a home. Yet it remains a nation; and there is not another nation in all the limits of civilization to-day that can boast so pure a blood, so unmixed and genuine a pedigree. What is this but the fulfillment of the prophet's prediction, "I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve; yet shall not one grain fall upon the ground," to be buried up there and lost, or have its distinctive quality hidden. Now if there be not the finger of God in this unaccountable result, let him who can explain it on principles physiological, or growing out of the analogy of experience and the influences working in human affairs. To me the Jew is a miracle, as truly as the passage of the Red Sea.

Our subject brings us a lesson of danger and a lesson of duty.

I. A lesson of danger. If the Israelites were punished beyond other men, it was because they had been blessed and favored beyond other men. It cannot be pretended that at the time the awful calamities fell upon the nation, which ended in exiling them from their country and scattering them through the world,

they were worse than any other people that the Roman arms reached and subdued. The contrary is true. To a great extent the Jews, with all the spiritual deadness and formality that had crept upon their service of God, were exempt from the loathsome and shameless dissoluteness which had corrupted human society in other countries. They alone had the knowledge of God and His Will; and it had not lost its restraining and sanctifying power over them altogether. No, when their strange doom overtook them, it was because with all this light they had rejected Christ, and refused to believe the Gospel, and persecuted the Church, and were deeply sunk in unbelief and wickedness, such as their own professed religion exposed and condemned. The pungent question of St. Paul sets their case in the just light: "Thou that makest thy boast of the Law, through breaking the Law dishonorest thou God?" "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities," was the voice of God to them by one of His prophets centuries earlier. Our Saviour embodies the rule in those words of His, "He that knew his Master's will and did it not shall be beaten with many stripes." "Unto whom much is given of him shall much be required." And it assumes the shape of frightful menace in the words, "Thou Capernaum that art exalted unto heaven shalt be cast down to hell." "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than for you." "If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin." Privilege and responsibility are correspondent and parallel. The sins of Christians are far worse than the like sins of heathens, more criminal,

more dangerous. "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee." "Because of unbelief they were broken off; and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear."

II. A lesson of duty. None can look upon the ancient people of God in their fallen condition, it might seem, without sensibility and compassion. Their very callousness in right minds will augment these feelings; for deadness to degradation is of itself in depths a lower deep. God has made their fall an occasion of benefit to the Gentile world. "We have obtained mercy through their unbelief." Their fall broke through the wall that threatened to confine Christianity within the narrow precincts of Jewish pride and prejudice, and gave it to "have free course and be glorified," scope to grow and spread itself as no longer a Jewish sect, but a universal blessing intended for all mankind. Their forfeited heritage we possess, and doubtless, not only actually, but justly, lawfully. Surely, however, it becomes us not to look coldly or scornfully on the disfranchised heir. He is by the same Divine Hand that cast him out commended to our mercy, that he "through our mercy may obtain mercy." Nor are we without interested motives to this mercy, for the Apostle expressly tells us that the Gospel cannot obtain its grand triumph in our race till the blindness that has happened unto Israel is done away, and the veil taken off their hearts, that there may be "one fold and one Shepherd." Not till then will the Church be presented unto Christ "a glorious Church, not having spot nor wrinkle, or any such thing." It is our duty, then, not to contemn the Jew, nor hate him, nor despair of him, but as he is, "touching the election, beloved for the fathers' sake" in the eyes of God,

so should he be in his fallen greatness an object of loving interest in ours. To us he answers the great purpose of proving the Gospel which he rejects, and for this we owe him a debt of no inconsiderable amount. When we may, let us do him good. Let us withhold our hand from no hopeful effort for his enlightenment. Let us gladly welcome any signs of returning faith in him in any quarter. And let us ever pray that God would have mercy on all Jews, and fetch them home to his flock, to be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites.

XXV.

THE BLESSING.

And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. — DEUTERONOMY XXXIII. 1.

A COMPARISON of this blessing with the similar oracle of the dying Jacob, is full of interest and instruction. A consideration of this blessing ought not to be passed over in our survey of the closing portion of the life of Moses, and I will throw it into the form of such a comparison in this lecture, taking up the tribes in succession. But I will depart from the order so far as to speak first of the tribe of Simeon.

A thing that must strike us in prosecuting this, is the total omission of Simeon in the benediction of Moses. The dying father of the nation has for that tribe no word of benediction, no assignment of special advantages and favors. The silence is more expressive than any words. It is the sequel of the prophecy of Jacob, and is its virtual reiteration and confirmation. That prophecy runs thus: "Simeon and Levi are brethren: instruments of cruelty in their habitations. . . . . Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." How this curse was reversed, and without change in the letter turned into a pregnant blessing in the case of Levi, we have seen on a former occasion, and see more clearly further on.

But on Simeon it rested with unmitigated force. Nothing for him but to be disintegrated and dispersed, almost lose his tribal distinctness and honor, dwindle away, and fall into obscurity. Even during the wandering in the wilderness, he had begun to decrease, as may appear by a comparison of the two enumerations of the people, falling off in numbers by no less than 37,000 men. Perhaps this was in consequence of the plague that followed the idolatry of Peor, in which Simeon was disgracefully conspicuous. In the allotment of the country after the conquest, Simeon's portion fell to him in the southwestern corner of the land, and was taken out of the portion of Judah. But of the greater part of it he never gained possession, and it always continued in the hands of the Philistines. His people, cramped by the narrowness of their territory, spread themselves over the whole country, and filled inferior positions among their countrymen. It was the most insignificant of the tribes. Moses, looking down the vista of the future, could foresee no good for this tribe, and is silent. His silence is the solemn indorsement of Jacob's malediction.

Reuben. — First in the catalogue of the tribes stands Reuben, the oldest of Jacob's sons, deposed from the honors of primogeniture on account of his unbridled indulgence of foul passion. In the words of his father Jacob, "Unstable," tumultuous or unrestrained, "as water, thou shalt not excel," not be foremost, not eminent. By Moses he is here assured simply of a continuance among the tribes, without any special advantages or large increase of numbers of his people: "Let Reuben live and not die, and let his men be few." This is the true rendering, almost beyond a doubt. The "not" in our translation is an interpolation. The

Reubenites were a pastoral people, and chose their inheritance on the east of Jordan, in a country peculiarly adapted to their tastes and occupations, where they prospered and grew wealthy. But their numbers had already been lessened in the wilderness by their connection with Korah's rebellion. And in their exposed situation on an unprotected frontier, that lay open to the attacks of the hostile races around them, under incessant assaults the tribe wore away, so that we finally find their cities completely in the possession of Moab and Ammon. Deposed from his dignity for his hereditary pride and passion, existence was all that Moses promised him, and it was all that he had. He should live and not die, but his men should be few. Such was his history.

JUDAH. — "And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help to him from his enemies." The translation, with an apt comment, is well given by Dr. Pusey thus: "Thou wilt bring him back to his people; his hands strive for him; and help from his enemies Thou wilt be." "This," he adds, "was the abiding hope of the wives and mothers of Judah, when its armies went forth to the field." Preservation, victory, strength sufficient to do his work and fight his battles, protection and aid in all contests with opposing forces; these are the special distinctions of this, the royal, the conquering, the triumphant tribe, seen conspicuously in all its history — weighty in the nation from the first — kingly in David and his regal line — lord of all in that "Lion of the tribe of Judah," who "goes forth conquering and to conquer," "having on His vesture and on His thigh a name writ-

ten King of kings, and Lord of lords," that Shiloh of whom Jacob, in the correspondent prophecy, foretold that "to Him should the gathering of the people be." Of this the more ancient oracle of Jacob concerning him, in which are ascribed to him popularity, wealth, victory, and dominion, you thus see that the words of Moses are confirmatory. And both together form a picture of which the career of that great, numerous, and powerful tribe was a striking accomplishment. And though its earthly glory has now vanished, "it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah;" and in Him its glory is everlasting and "its dominion that which shall not pass away." A signal fulfillment, truly, of the two concurrent prophecies.

LEVI. — We are next presented with the future condition of Levi, as it lay revealed to the aged seer. This was his own tribe, the tribe which his own masterful achievements were enough to make illustrious, the tribe of Aaron and his descendants, clothed with priestly honors, its whole body occupied in the custody and execution of things divine. This honor they had because of their fidelity, tested under circumstances of sore temptation. "They resisted the temptation to idolatry at Horeb, and to worldly glory and pleasure in the plains of Moab;" and "they preferred God's honor and service before all earthly considerations and ties of flesh and blood." To them, in the benediction of Moses, in reward were given the Thummim and the Urim, the perfections and the lights, with which through divine communications they were to guide the people. They were to teach the people They were to offer sacrifices for them. On their substance and their works God's blessing was to rest. Their foes were to be smitten and utterly destroyed. This

is the purport of Moses' prediction concerning them. And yet the words of their father Jacob, "I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel," were to stand fast, though God would find a way to put a new meaning into them that should make them innocuous, — He who can reconcile contradictions and make opposite things agree; and so, though they should be "divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel," as Jacob had foretold, for "God is not a man that He should lie," it should not be as in the case of Simeon their colleague in wickedness, to sink into meanness and obscurity, but to fill the honorable and beneficent office of acting "for men in things pertaining to God." Thus the two seemingly contradictory oracles concerning Levi blend and grow harmonious in a fulfillment that forcibly shows the power, the wisdom, and the faithfulness of God.

BENJAMIN. — "And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders." The corresponding words of Jacob are, "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil." There seems no union of analogy between the two predictions, yet they are at least compatible, not contradictory. They look at their subject on different sides. The two together describe Benjamin's nature, alert, active, under provocation fierce and destructive, as Jacob represents him; and yet he is set forth as specially beloved of God, dwelling under His especial care, protected by His guardianship, borne by Him as a man carries His beloved child, according to the words of Moses. The fierceness of the tribe, as we learn in the Book of Joshua, involved

it in a war with the nation at large, in which it was nearly exterminated. But, recovered from its decay, it became closely associated with Judah, and a participant of those favors which God bestowed upon that grand tribe. It clung to the house of David in the disruption of the kingdom, and so remained true to the theocracy and the Mosaic worship, and in unison with Judah enjoyed special tokens of God's favor; and in the latter day it sent forth from its bosom Saul of Tarsus, with all the fire of the race in his ardent nature, and with all the signs of God's favor that pertained to it resting upon him in his manifold successes and escapes. The two oracles here again beautifully combine and cohere, and together meet a striking completion.

JOSEPH. — We come to Joseph. And here both prophecies, the elder and the later, seem to labor under the weight of their theme. Joseph is the great preserver and benefactor of the nation, the second author of its life, as it were; and its debt of love and gratitude, under divine inspiration, pours forth itself in strains of exalted praise and gratulation in both of them. The blessings of nature in their richest abundance are invoked upon him, all that the heavens above and the deeps beneath can furnish, all that the rays of the sun produce and gild, or the moonbeams brighten, the products of the mountains and the plains, "the good-will of Him that dwelt in the bush," and who is ever His Church's preserver amid trial and danger, are asked for him that was "separated from his brethren," and that in being thus separated, was sent before them to save their lives. The glory of a bullock, and the horns, that is, the strength of a bison or wild bull are ascribed to him, and it is foretold that "with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the

earth." Wealth, might, success, ever accumulating tokens of God's goodness, are ascribed to Joseph, to be distributed to "the ten thousands of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh," the two tribes into which the descendants of Joseph, by the adopting act of Jacob, were divided, in proportion to their respective numbers and dignity. Such is Moses' blessing on Joseph. And now, if we compare with this Jacob's blessing, we shall see that it coincides with it under different images. In that earlier blessing he is a fruitful bough by a well, hurt by the archers, but unbroken in strength and courage. And in it also the same accumulation of natural benefits under the same characteristic title of the "separate from his brethren," is promised him. Here there is no discrepancy, and no piecing together to be done. And the fulfillment of the joint prophecy in the fruitfulness of Joseph's territory, and the eminence which Ephraim obtained among the tribes, so as after their division into two dominions to give its name to all the nations except Judah and Benjamin, is clear and impressive.

ZEBULUN AND ISSACHAR. — Zebulun and Issachar are coupled by Moses in this blessing; and Zebulun is told to "rejoice in his going out," and "Issachar in his tents." The territory of these tribes constituted the Galilee of the New Testament, the scene of the Lord's teaching and miracles, and the original home of His Apostles. It was a maritime region, lying between the Mediterranean and the Sea of Galilee in the north of Palestine. Accordingly Jacob says of Zebulun, that he "shall dwell in the haven of the sea, and shall be for an haven of ships, and his border shall be unto Zidon." While Issachar is likened by him to "a strong ass couching down between two burdens." He

sees "that rest is good, and the land that it is pleasant, and bows his shoulder to bear, and becomes a servant unto tribute." This is a heavy-moulded tribe, fond of ease and plenty, and willing to purchase tranquillity at the expense of subjection and vassalage. Zebulun was commercial, Issachar agricultural, in these predictions; and so they were in fact. "They sucked the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand." The city of Ptolemais, the great port of northern Palestine, lay in the portion of Zebulun, and the great plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon, the garden of the whole country, in Issachar's. Thus the one dwelt in a haven of ships, and rejoiced in his going out thence after the gains of a lucrative trade; and the other saw that the land was good, and rejoiced in his tents, the tents of his shepherds and the settled dwellings of his husbandmen. So consonant are the two prophetic descriptions; and so clear, in their fulfillment, are the signs of a more than mortal foresight.

GAD. — "And of Gad he said, Blessed be He that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head. And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the lawgiver was he seated, and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the Lord, and his judgments with Israel." These are the words of Moses concerning him. Jacob simply says, "Gad, a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last." Gad was one of the two tribes whose possessions lay to the eastward of the Jordan, on an exposed frontier, and the continual battling for life which that dangerous position made necessary is what the language of Jacob seems to indicate. The same warlike character, in accordance with Jacob's

representation, is thus exhibited in the words of Moses, "He dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head." When he is said to have "provided the first part for himself," reference is had to the fact of his choosing the first conquered country for his possession. There, in the portion which the lawgiver assigned him, was he accordingly seated, while yet, as the terms of the bargain demanded, he went with the other tribes across the river to the war, to "execute the justice of the Lord, and his judgments with Israel" on the idolatrous and guilty Canaanites. Prediction and fulfillment tally again.

DAN. — We pass to Dan. "Dan," says Moses, "is a lion's whelp; he shall leap from Bashan." Bashan is the kingdom of Og, which, when Moses spake this blessing, had recently been conquered, a country of rich and beautiful uplands, filled with an almost incredible number of cities, whose magnificence is to this day attested by gigantic remains, as we have already mentioned. It is from this high land, overlooking the upper waters of the Jordan, that Moses represents Dan as "leaping like a lion's whelp" to pounce upon the portion that fell to him in Canaan. Jacob, in his blessing, describes Dan as "a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse's heels, so that his rider shall fall backward." His insidious attack on Laish is an illustration of its fitness. The two images have their point of contact in the idea of the secrecy and suddenness which they involve. As the lion hidden in the thicket bursts forth, as the snake coiled up in the herbage darts out, and seizes the prey unawares, so Dan springs upon his enemy with an unforeseen rapidity, against which no vigilance can guard. Yet of this rapid leap of Dan's there is no record in

the sacred story. But this confirms the genuineness of the prophecy, because, as Dr. Wordsworth well remarks, "no Hebrew forger would have put forth a pretended prophecy, to which there was no historical response in the annals of the Hebrew nation." Fictitious prophecies are copies of known facts. There is indeed a school of skepticism to whom the fulfillment of a prediction is proof that it is not a prediction at all, but is either a shrewd surmise or a fabrication, because their theory does not allow that the human mind may be illuminated by an infusion of divine prescience, and so become the vehicle of a knowledge of future things. Prophecy to such is but history inverted, and looked upon as from an antecedent stand-point, cast in the mould of apparent prediction. But why then insert that which is not history to mar the verisimilitude? These prophecies, to which there is no historic counterpart on record, answer the purpose of refuting the sophism.

NAPHTALI. — "And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favor and full with the blessing of the Lord, possess thou the west and the south." Such are the words of Moses in our translation, but Dr. Wordsworth translates instead, "Possess thou the sea and the sunny region," the mild country lying open to the sunshine on the sea of Gennesareth, where Naphtali's lot was cast. His father Jacob, in the earlier oracle, had called "Naphtali a hind let loose," and described him as "giving goodly words;" and if our translation be correct, as Dr. Pusey, a high authority as to the meaning of the original language, thinks it is, the words would picture him to us as a graceful, elegant, active tribe, well-spoken and endowed with the gift of ready eloquence, such a people as might

not unnaturally arise amid the genial influences of a fertile soil and a balmy climate. So again the two oracles agree.

ASHER. — The last on the list is the tribe of Asher. "And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." A numerous and prolific tribe, pacific and popular, rich in the olive and its valuable product, firm and enduring, with strength proportioned to his needs, and lasting as his term of existence; such was Asher to be, according to the representation of Moses. Jacob declares concerning him, that "his head shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties." The accounts are quite coincident. This was a maritime tribe. In the war with Sisera, Asher is complained of because he "continued on the sea-shore and abode in his breaches," that is, the indentations and havens of his coast. The fertile region of Carmel, and "a rich lowland from Carmel to Zidon, abounding in olive groves, and plenteous in food for man," and in royal dainties for his delectation, was Asher's portion, and thus it fulfilled the saying of both Jacob and Moses.

Now, my brethren, I think, when we call to remembrance that one of these oracles was delivered in Egypt, before Israel's enslavement, and the other on the eastern side of Jordan before the tribes had entered the Land of Promise, or had any knowledge of their respective portions, and that their portions were divided to them by lot and without any reference to any previous intimations; and then if we mark the number of the coincidences between the two predictions; and of both of them with historic facts, we

shall be constrained to feel, and to acknowledge, if we are candid, that they cannot be accidental presagings, or the fruit of mere human calculation, but that they indicate the intelligence and will of God working in them, and stamping upon the book that contains them the impress of His power and truth. And so we shall go away from this investigation with a deeper conviction that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable;" and that "we ought to give more earnest heed to the things that we have heard lest at any time we should let them slip," because "we think," and think rightly, "that in them we have eternal life."

Again, we have here a very striking and impressive illustration of the transmissive effect of human conduct and character. See how the life of each one of the tribes was to a large extent bound up in and determined by the qualities of the particular son of Jacob from which it was the descendant; how Reuben's incest deprives his tribe of eminence, and dooms it to an inferior position; how Simeon's violence scatters and injures his posterity, till it almost blots the name from under heaven; how Judah's nobleness stamps its impress on his tribe; and how the great character of Joseph shows itself in the dignity and influence of his descendants; how each tribe has the seed of its distinctive life in its ancestor; how God thus "visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him, and shows mercy unto thousands in them that love Him and keep His commandments." This providential law runs through the ways of God with great fixedness and uniformity, and we need but to open our eyes and look thoughtfully upon the world to see its

operation. In the things of eternity we are judged individually, and "every one of us shall give account of himself unto God," and "the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." But in temporal things we are dealt with corporately, and leave our good or evil a legacy to those that come after us. So the evil man blights his race; while the good man leaves "an inheritance to his children's children." This law is a powerful muniment of virtue.

But equally plain is it from our survey that this transmissive current may be arrested and turned into a new channel by those who are being borne on by it. Plain is this in the case of Levi, the sentence on whom, "though unreversed, was turned into a blessing and an occasion of greater nearness to God," in consequence of the bravery and fidelity of the tribe on the occasion of Korah's rebellion. "So," says Dr. Pusey, "was there stamped on the history of the people the great law of the justice and the love of God; that irreversible chastisement deepens on persevering impenitence, but on repentance, becomes, through the rich exuberance of His mercy, the channel of His choicest favors." No such fatality attends an ancestor's crime or folly that its consequences may not be averted by personal or collective virtue. Nay, the very effort that is required to stem its mischievous influence may be that on which God will look with special indulgence and peculiar love. Nor let it be forgotten that the reverse side is equally true, and that a base posterity of an honorable ancestry is not honorable on its account, but does by that relation which it disgraces cast on its vileness a blacker shade.

Finally, let us understand and consider that all these blessings, magnified and spiritualized, are ours.

"We are the Circumcision," we are "the Israel of God." We are now that Church which "Israel according to the flesh" was in its day. Upon us devolve its honors, its duties, its responsibilities. Let us think of this with grateful and solemn reflections; and, in view of it, pour forth our hearts in the glowing words with which Moses closes his benediction: —

> "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun,
> Who rideth upon the heaven in thy help,
> And in His excellency on the sky.
> The eternal God is thy Refuge,
> And underneath are the everlasting Arms:
> And He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee,
> And shall say, Destroy them.
> Israel then shall dwell in safety alone:
> The Fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine;
> Also his heavens shall drop down dew.
> Happy art thou, O Israel!
> Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord,
> The Shield of thy help,
> And who is the Sword of thy excellency!"

And do Thou, O God, the Protector of all who trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy, that Thou, being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal.

XXVI.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. — DEUTERONOMY XXXIV. 5, 6.

So an epic wonderful in its beginning runs out in a wonderful close, and an infancy of all but miracle, is matched by a death about which hangs a veil of preternatural strangeness and mystery. An aged man, a hundred and twenty years old, with his eye not dim and his natural force not abated, looks out for a little space upon the land he has spent his life in seeking, and then closes his eyes forever on it and on all earthly scenes; and his body, cared for by no human love or veneration, has such sepulture as God bestows upon it, without sign or memorial to mark where it is, that human eyes could ever discover. I have called this story an epic; and surely, if the rapid march of scenes and events, of things done and suffered by a great doer in a great cause, with manhood, bravery, steadiness, and singleness of aim, can stamp an epic character on the story of a life, the life of Moses fulfills the conditions. And yet it is not an epic in any embellishment of fictitious or poetic coloring, but only an epic in its stern truthfulness, and in the solemn grandeur of its hero, the loftiness of his aims, and the magnitude of his achievements.

The work of Moses was done; not that the thing he

had been working at was complete, but that so much of it as was assigned to him to do was done. The remnant he must leave to another, to that man who had been his "minister," his attendant and helper, who had been training for it under his care, by his example, by his teaching, Joshua the son of Nun. The work is not rounded into fullness, but remains a circle with a segment wanting; a cone not carried up to its proper apex but truncated, manifestly left before completion. The fiat is inexorable: "Thou shalt not go over Jordan:" no tears or entreaties will avail to alter it. But he shall see it. His eyes shall drink in its goodliness, he shall have ocular evidence of the amplitude and the beauty of the land that his people should inherit. And then he should remove from the shadow to the substance, to a better land than Canaan, to fairer fields, and "the River of the Water of Life." Joshua should finish the work, and come to him; and then "he that soweth and he that reapeth should rejoice together."

"And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the Valley of Jericho unto Zoar. And the Lord said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither." Pisgah is the elevated range on the east of the Jordan of which Nebo is the highest point. The prospect from it is very extensive, rising as it does higher than

any country comprised within the limits of the Holy Land. The view here vouchsafed to Moses is represented as including the whole country from Dan in the extreme north — where the tribe of Dan afterwards established the outlying colony that gave the place its name, and which in later history is often spoken of as one of the limits of the land, — to its extreme southern boundary, and across to "the utmost sea," which is the Mediterranean.

Before him lay spread out a magnificent panorama of hill and dale, of wood and cultivated field, of towers and cities, the habitations of men, and the temples of their religion. The race that then dwelt in Palestine were by no means a horde of barbarians, but a people further advanced in elegance and luxury than the Israelites themselves, the same race of men that in earlier days inhabited Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain, submerged beneath the waters of that mysterious lake which lay at the great prophet's feet; the race that built Tyre and Sidon and Carthage, and were in their day the pioneers of commerce and adventurous navigation. Through the landscape like a silvery thread the Jordan wound its way from that northern lake, around whose shores light in after time sprung up "to them that sat in darkness and the shadow of death, the land of Zebulon, and the land of Nepthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles," to that Dead Sea in which its waters find their tomb. Directly in front of him stood that Mount Moriah where Abraham of old offered up Isaac in intent, and received him from death "in a figure," type of that precious Death and glorious Resurrection which in due time should there come to pass; the realm of that Melchizedeck, after whose order a greater One

should come, who like him should "sit a priest upon His throne;" where Solomon's temple should arise and perish; and where the fane of the false prophet should succeed it, "standing where it ought not," "till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." Far over the land gleamed in the distance the waves of the Mediterranean, and we may even suppose that in the verge of the western horizon like a cloud might be discerned that Chittim, whose ships should come to afflict Eber and to afflict Asshur, and Japhet issue forth to dwell in the tents of Shem.

We are told of Moses that "his eye was not dim;" but no natural sight could take in such an extent of territory. There must have been some strengthening and enlargement of the faculty of vision to enable him to take it in. The aged prophet saw, and as he saw, his ungratified desire subsided into rapture. He had seen, and was willing to die, and he died.

"And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; and no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." This burial of Moses is a mystery, and the scanty notices of Scripture offer little materials for a solution. On the Mount of Transfiguration he appeared with Elijah in attendance upon Christ in a material shape; and from this it might seem that he had attained his consummation in body as well as in soul. And there are those mysterious words of St. Jude about "Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses." Hints these seem to be that the fleshly part of the leader of Israel had a disposition made of it different from that of common men. But we do not well to speculate where God is silent. God buried him and hid the place of his interment. God

disposed of his mortal remains in such way as seemed good to Him. It was an august funeral, though no man was there, and the only onlookers were the angels. God put honor on him in this way, and secured his grave from becoming an object of superstitious veneration. The act markedly discountenances pilgrimages to the sepulchres and bones of saints. The act is significant otherwise. "He showed," says Dr. Wordsworth, "that the bodies of His saints are not unclean in His sight. He showed His approval of the burial of the dead, which is a testimony to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. He showed that He knows where all bodies are which are hidden from men, whether they be consumed by fire or whelmed in the sea; and He will bring them forth at the Great Day, as he brought Moses forth at the Transfiguration to appear before Christ. He who made all men from the dust will awaken all from the dust."

So the life of Moses had ended. To the common fate of men he had bowed. From this the greatest have no exemption, but "one event happeneth to all." A life of wonderful vicissitudes and violent contrasts, of stupendous labors, of unequalled trials, of faithfulness, of untiring, single-hearted, unselfish devotion to a great end, of unshaken faith in God, of unswerving benevolence to men, had found its close. Its task was finished; its moral worth summed up, and its account sealed and laid away against the judgment of the Great Day. "Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died." "And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended." The man dies, and then the grief dies; so it is. "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like

unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel."

So wrote the historian. But now the Prophet like unto Moses, and far greater than he, has come. "For Moses was faithful in all his house; but Christ as a Son over His own house, which house we are." "The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." "The Law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." God grant us grace to press into it with a fervor and determination such as it merits, that being of His house here we may pass to a better country, even an heavenly, and sing forever "The Song of Moses the servant of God and the Song of the Lamb."

And now, it seems to me that in this death of Moses we may see something also of a parabolic character, and that in reference both to its temporal and its spiritual bearings. In a certain sense there was to Moses nothing that is not common unto men, nothing, I mean, in respect to the seeming incompleteness of his life and prematureness of his death. It is the common lot of man to fall short of the full realization of his hopes, and the full execution of his designs, and the full fruits of his pains, and leave them to others; and as Solomon says, "Who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool?" "Herein is the saying true," says our Saviour, "one soweth and another reapeth." Human lives are but fragmentary things, beginnings of large plans that are never carried out, preparations for that

which no time comes to realize. When we have labored and wrought out some invention, some useful instrumentality, that is to bring us honor and comfort, we look over and see our Canaan, and die. Others enter into our labors. We are forgotten, so nothing comes to us but the most unprofitable return of posthumous renown. "To labor and not to see the end of our labors, to sow and not to reap, to be removed from this earthly scene before our work has been appreciated, and when it will be carried on not by ourselves but by others," this is common among men. There are few of those great discoveries that have largely benefited human society that have been believed in and duly valued in the time of their makers. Nay, not unlikely they were sneered at and ridiculed. "Ye are the children of them that slew the prophets; your fathers killed them, and ye build their sepulchres." So the poet Cowley, as quoted by Dean Stanley, says of that great philosopher, whose new wisdom came not to be adopted till after his death, that he —

> "Did on the very border stand
> Of the blessed Promised Land;
> And from the mountain's top of his exalted wit
> Saw it himself, and showed us it;
> But life did never to one man allow
> Time to discover worlds, and conquer too."

Nor is there in this thing a limitation to great men, and men of conspicuous powers and place. It is the general condition, for men to toil in hope, and then, just as hope seems to be ripening into fruition, to see the object of their hope drop from their hand as it sunders its clasp in death; and the vision that fades from our dying eyes is forever the vision of that which was to be, but never was.

Now it seems to me that this constitution of human

things is in itself a pretty clear intimation of something beyond, in which this failure is to meet its compensation; that this life is not a whole thing, but a part of a greater thing. It is difficult to believe that God has made a creature only to be balked, to be a thing which never attains the perfection of its purpose. The career is interrupted but it is not ended. A curtain drops that hides its further prosecution from our sight, but within the veil it proceeds and goes on to maturity. If there was anything worthy in it it is immortal, and will expand and grow forever. We see that it does so in this world, in the hands of new agents, for the benefit of new generations. But "whatsoever good thing any man hath done the same shall he receive of the Lord," and so some profit of his worthy labor will be with him and go on increasing eternally in the world where that which is in part shall be done away. Let not thine hands hang down because life is short, and its requitals poor and meagre. Eternity is long, and there thou mayest expand; and there it shall be no more said, "One soweth and another reapeth."

And in our spiritual life this is even more true. Alas! now, what is that life but essays, struggles, approximations, onward movements, that seem to carry us near the goal only to be driven back again, as it seems, to the very borders of that Red Sea which we crossed to enter upon it? We have before us the ideal of a true Christian life, but our experience is a very poor realization of it. And our progress towards it is so slow that we almost doubt if there is any. We conquer an evil habit, as we hope; but by and by some sudden temptation overtakes us and reveals it to us in its old unbroken power. We get some clear

view of the things of faith, and think that we shall always dwell hereafter in their light; but anon they grow thin and unsubstantial; the visible resumes its old ascendency, and we seem to ourselves walled in by palpable and material things, as though we could get no access to anything beyond them. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, so that we cannot do the things that we would." We conquer Amalek, and Ammon renews the fight. Balak the son of Zippor hires Balaam the son of Beor to curse us, and if from his lips unwillingly comes forth some sweet and holy song to cheer us on our way, it beguiles us into indiscretion and carelessness, and becomes to us a worse curse than his lips could utter, by making us the dupes and slaves of some guilty desire.

So we fare on, desiring to be holy, striving to be holy, and not holy, or only so as the wish and effort give evidence of some appreciation and practical knowledge of the quality, but it is only as in a babe are the rudiments of a complete manhood. Early youth comes with its strong desires, fresh, vigorous appetites, and its heady sense of a new-found independence; and our good resolves and purposes, made in all sincerity at the altar of God, are shaken as by the wind that bows before it the sturdy trees of the forest; and the Apostle's admonition to young men too often falls feebly even on those of them that are well-disposed, and not given over to vicious indulgences. And if religion weathers that trying period, trying not to one sex alone, but to both, it moves on to the middle region of our stay in earth, out of the scene of passion into that of care, and business, and occupation, and shifts its place without much lessening its exposures. Avarice

and ambition, and the vexing anxieties of industry in some field of labor for a livelihood or a position, engross the mind, deaden the impressions of spiritual interests, and fill the soul with worriment and calculation that leave little room for better thoughts and feelings. And in this sordid atmosphere, loaded with the exhalations of temporal concerns, religion has to keep itself alive and grow, if it can. To keep holiness in his mind and not let go his hold upon it and his aim at it utterly, is perhaps, the man thinks, doing pretty well for one living under such conditions.

But there is a calm evening coming to be holy in, when passion has subsided, and the world undone its grasp, and there will be nothing but a peaceful pause, wherein the soul may plume its wings and poise itself for its upward flight. Vain thought, too often. Care pushes itself out often into the tracts of age, and habits that middle life formed, old age cannot easily dismiss. The body bows under its burdens. "The clouds return after the rain." The mind loses its elasticity and clearness. And though "his salvation is nearer than when he believed," it is scarcely more mature, scarcely under circumstances that are more favorable to its maturity. The leisure does not come. The spirit has lost its eagerness of desire and its vigor of action. Alas! holiness has not come with time, nor does time now bring it. Nearer and nearer the traveller draws to the end of his journey, for time will not stand still to furnish him with a convenient season. He is a holy man in some comparative sense, but no such man as he always meant to be, as he hoped to be before he died. Ah, there is the mistake. Not before he dies, but after it. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He

shall appear we shall be like Him." He *shall* be like Him. Ah, that is enough. And now he goes up into his Pisgah to die. He sees it; it is near at hand — the thing he has so longed for, the thing he so persistently yet so feebly sought. It lies before him in all its beauty, such as "eye hath not seen," the holiness, the freedom from sin, the escape from the bondage of sinful inclinations he has so long desired. But there is a Jordan to be crossed. For it will not come to him, he must go to it, not in this life, but in another. And so he dies, imperfect to the last, but imperfect no longer. He wakes up in God's likeness and is satisfied with it.

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